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WIRE MAGAZINE

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Montreux

THE 21ST Montreux Jazz Festival, from July 2-18, includes over 50 acts including, on July 3, Pat Metheny and his group; on July 8, James Cotton, and on the 10th, "Jazz Aid" with Michel Colombier, Isaac Hayes, Toots Thielemans, Harlem Boys Choir and l'Orchestre National de Jazz de France. "Dizzy", on July 13, will feature Gillespie leading an all-star big band in celebration of his 70th birthday. On Saturday, July 11, there will be a jazz parade in the streets of Montreux, leading up to the Modern Jazz Quartet's "Jazz Soft And Spicy" programme on July 12. Further information: Montreux International Jazz Festival, Case 97, CH-1820 Montreux. Tel (021) 63 12 12.

Birmingham Festival

THE BIRMINGHAM International Jazz Festival's presentation of the Count Basie Orchestra on July 8 at Birmingham Odeon will mark the start of that band's European tour - and their only UK date outside London. The Festival runs from July 3-July 12 inclusive, with the following notable dates and names: July 3, The Jazz Band Ball; July 4, *Lady Sings The Blues* at the Sir Adrian Boult Hall; July 5, Stan Tracey with Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra at The Grand Hotel; and the Alex Walsh Re-Union Band at The Albany Hotel; July 6, Tommy Chase Quartet at the Seraphallen; July 7, Max Collie Rhythm Aces at Solihull Library Theatre and Kenny Ball's Jazzmen

at the Tower Ballroom plus Temperance Seven at Liberty's and Big Joe Duskin at The Elbow Room; July 8, Ronnie Scott Quartet at Burberries; July 9, Charlie Musselwhite at The Junction, and Dave Liebman Quartet at Midland Arts Centre, plus George Melly with John Chilton's Feetwarmers and Henry's Bootblacks at The Grand Hotel, and Humphrey Lyttelton Band at Burberries; July 10, Acker Bilk's Paramount Jazz Band at The Grand Hotel; July 11, John Williams with the National Youth Jazz Orchestra at The Town Hall and The Guest Stars at the Midlands Arts Centre; July 12, M & B Jam Session at Cannon Hill Park Arena. Another major concert set at Birmingham Odeon by the Festival features The Modern Jazz Quartet, who will be in the UK as part of their 35th Anniversary Tour.

Mike's Rossini

FOR SEVEN consecutive nights (July 6-July 12 inclusive), at 8 pm, London's Institute for Contemporary Arts Theatre will host Kate and Mike Westbrook's latest jazz extravaganza: a programme of songs, ensemble arrangements and solo improvisations drawn from the operas of Gioacchino Rossini. The first performance (Monday July 6) is a preview with all tickets £2.45 (plus 60p day pass for non-members). For the remaining performances, tickets are £4.90 (plus day pass). Advance bookings are available from 01-930-3647. To coincide with the event, Hat-ART records are releasing a live recording of Westbrook-Rossini (Hat-ART 2040).

AC bursaries

THE ARTS Council is offering bursaries to musicians and composers working in electro-acoustic music in England. Last year, six such bursaries of between £1,000 and £3,250 were awarded. The scheme is not open to full-time students, nor for the support of full-time educational activities or the purchase of equipment. Further information and applications are available from: John Muir, Music Officer, Arts Council, 105 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AU. The closing date for applications is July 10.

Taxi!

JULY SEES a heavy touring schedule for African ensemble Taxi Para Para with July dates as follows: 3rd, Albany Empire, Depeford, London; 4th, lunchtime, Royal Festival Hall foyer; 10th, University of London Union; 11th, Pied Bull, London; and 26th, Ravenscourt Park, London.

Laibach and think of...

THOSE FAMOUS sons of Trbovlje, Laibach, turn up in the UK once again on July 28, to play London's Riverside Studios for one night only at 9.30 pm. The concert will mark the beginning of the Yugoslav art movement "Neue Slowenische Kunst" at Riverside, which will include theatre group Red Pilot (July 29 & 30) and painters Irwin. Ticket prices: Laibach £6.00; Red Pilot £6.00; £4.00 concessions.

Bracknell!

BRACKNELL IS back - with three days of international music in the grounds, Wilde Theatre and main building of South Hill Park, Bracknell. To book phone 03444 484123 or 01 437 4967 between 6.30pm-9am or write to Manor Jazz Festivals Ltd, 42 Old Compton St, London W1V 5PB. Performances include: on July 3, 7.00-10.30 pm, the Lurie Brothers' Lounge Lizards (first UK concert this year), the Andy Sheppard Band and late-night Festival club at the Wilde Theatre, 11.00pm-3am, featuring the Happy End plus Sambatucada (DJ Gilles Peterson) and, in the Cellar Bar (Recital Room), Thanks Jazz from Bristol. On July 4, in the Marquee from 12.30-10.30 pm continuously, Jack de Johnette/Special Edition, the George Russell Orchestra, Stan Tracey's Hexad, the Jazz Warriors, Evan Parker/Alex von Schlippenbach/Paul Lovens, Itchy Fingers, the Steve Williamson Quartet; at the Wilde Theatre, from 12.00-10.30 pm continuously, Michael Nymann, Aki Takase, Steve Noble/Alex Magunt, Peter Cusack/Benar Achary, Mike Cooper/Steve Beresford/Max Eastley; in the Cellar Bar from 12.00-10.00 pm continuously, regional bands including Southampton Musicians Co-op, and Hornweb Saxophone Quartet; late-night Festival club, at the Wilde Theatre, 11.00-3.00 am, Steve Williamson Quartet + IDJ (jazz dance), Taxi Para Para, Clifford Jarvis Band plus DJ Gilles Peterson; in the Cellar Bar, 11.00pm-3.00am, Billy Jenkins, Lovely. On July 5, in the Mar-

queen, from 12.00-10.00pm continuously, Michael Brecker Band, Mike Gibbs Band, Steve Coleman/Five Elements, In Cahoots, Bheki Mseleku, Berkshire Youth Orchestra, in the Wilde Theatre, from 12.00-8.30 pm continuously, Evan Parker Project, Bobby Bradford + John Carter; in the Celler Bar from 12.00-8.30 pm continuously, Leicester Bley Band. Workshops (free to festival ticket-holders) will include sessions from Community Music, Musicworks, Terri Quayle, Bobby Bradford/John Carter, John Stevens and others appearing at the festival. All performances except late-night club events are included in the basic Festival ticket price.



Courtesy: at RFH

Capital's Fifth

THE CAPITAL Music Festival celebrates its fifth anniversary this year, with some notable events, including: on July 20, Sarah Vaughan (Royal Festival Hall); July 21, The Crusaders (RFH); July 22, the Stan Getz Quartet and Branford Marsalis Quartet (RFH); July 23, Wynton Marsalis Quartet and Courtney Pine Band (RFH); July 25, Stanley Jordan (RFH). On July 12 at Le Palais, Hammersmith, Tito Puente and Celia Cruz. On July 24, 'A Night In New Orleans' at the Royal Festival Hall, featuring Irma Thomas, Duke DeJon's Olympia Brass Band, and Rocking Dopsie and the Zydeco Twisters. The Capital fringe Festival, in Jubilee Gardens, South Bank, will feature on July 6, New Directions-Gail Thompson and Friends, including Andy Sheppard and First Light (7.30-10.15 pm) and the

Jim Mullen Four (11.00 pm); on July 9, Native Spirit: Root Jackson's Unfinished Business; and on Saturday, July 11, a Caribbean Carnival from 1.00pm-9.00pm, featuring Red Stripe Ebony, Mangrove, London Allstars, Stardust, Silver Steel, Metronomes, Flyover Carnival Dancers, Granada Shortney, Prince Ala Tung. Two nights in July will see 11 pm Jazz Dances with Baz Fe Jazz and, on July 7, Robin Jones' King Salsa, on July 10, After Tonight.

Sunderland

FOLLOWING THE successful launch of their club using local bands, Sunderland Jazz Club plan to begin booking major bands for dates from this September. In particular, they are looking to book some of those ensembles which visit Stockton Arts Centre, Darlington Arts Centre and New-

castle Corner House. Interested parties should contact Acting Secretary Peter Nicholson at 140 Southwick Rd, Sunderland.

School's in

FOR THOSE who like to put some purpose into the holiday period, summer offers a wide range of music studies and courses. The JAWS (Jazz at the West London Summer Institute School) summer school runs from July 27-31, 10am-11pm with Jazz Club meetings of students and tutors each night. The cost is £80 (£70 with concessions), information from J. Myhill, West London Institute HE, 300 St Margarets Rd, Twickenham, Middlesex TW1 1PT. Tel. 01-891-0121.

Andy Sheppard is one of the jazz tutors for Ashley Creative Music's summer schedule of holiday courses for children, which cost

£150. Twenty places are available on the course which is unique in its embrace of both non-Western musics and improvisation. Information: The Secretary, Ashley Creative Music, Ashley Manor, Corsham, Wiltshire SN14 9AW. Tel. Bath 0225 742820.

The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Barbican, London, will be holding its Jazz, Rock and Studio Music Summer School from August 2-August 7. For the third year, this enterprise brings together 200 jazz and rock musicians, plus 30 professional tutors, in a course which includes tutorials, harmony and improvisation classes, as well as large and small ensembles to be coached by tutors. Information from: Cheryl King, Administrator, JRSN Summer School, PO Box 75, Guildford

Surprise! (On TV)

TUPSDAYS from July 21, Channel 4 will be screening a selection of notable jazz documentaries under the umbrella title 'Sounds Of Surprise'. On July 21, WNET America's *Miles Ahead* profiles Davis' present band while moving back through past associations. On subsequent Tuesdays, the programme features *Saxophone Colossus*, Bob Muggie's homage to Sonny Rollins; *Father Time*, a film of Art Blakey; *Margus*, which updates its original footage through interviews with Mingus' wife and daughter, *Ornette: Made In America*, the film on which director Shirley Clarke spent two decades; and *Speaking In Tongues*, which centres on exploration of 60s-70s American protest music round Alvin Ayle's work.

Billie Lives

THE BILLIE HOLIDAY Memorial Foundation has been in existence for 14 years (Lena Horne is current chairperson of its Board). Yet founder I.E. Holiday, the late singer's sister, is planning to raise her organisation's profile. "I'm the founder and act as the President," Ms Holiday – whose first name is Nicole – told *Wire* from Washington, DC, "but this was my sister's idea, it was a dying request she made to me."

The Foundation plans to invest funds in the purchase of a Washington performing arts centre. "I've had so much help from entertainers," says Nicole Holiday, "but Billie had so many other fans, I want them to play a part too – particularly in London. London did a tremendous amount for Billie." So much, she says, that the Foundation hopes someday to start a British branch.



Billie Holiday:
from a recent
exhibition of
photos in Paris
by Tony Stone

HOLIDAY'S HOMETOWN of Baltimore, it seems, has not been so welcoming. "No, they haven't. It's so prejudiced there. I started to make it my headquarters, but it just didn't seem feasible – that's why we moved to DC. You would think Baltimore would be overjoyed that, even after all this time, they had such a famous native daughter. But that's not how it is.

"It's very bad," says Ms Holiday, "but I don't find that America honours the memory of her famous people when they

have any black blood." The Foundation has, she says, enjoyed "thousands and thousands of letters" from people who do want to help, "from all over America. What we want is to continue our drive overseas – we badly want to be able to purchase the centre and to run it from our own funds." Anyone interested in contacting the Foundation or Ms Holiday may do so at the following address: I.E. Nicole Holiday, 524 T St NW, Washington, DC 20001, USA.



WITH THE implementation of a Manhattan Metropolitan Transport Authority initiative called "Music Under New York", the czars of New York's subway system plan to legitimate underground music. A month of auditions (held in May at the city's Symphony Space performance centre) aimed to raise the ante of platform performances inside the tube, by 'sanctioning' the best musicians. These

MTA-blessed buskers are now playing at 20 subway stations – on protected sites.

Token Gesture?

The transit authority's sponsorship does not as yet extend to wages but those veteran musicians who thronged the auditions maintain that its side benefits are still substantial. And bagpipers, blues players, percussionists, "Cajun cellists", tambourine specialists and numerous jazz artists who took part all held that Manhattan's underground musicians constitute a unique talent pool.

"THE SUBWAY is not a bad gig," Alex Lodico of jazz and blues ensemble Chicken Wings told *New York Times* man William Geist. "We even make more money in some stations than we do in a club. We can make as much as \$20 apiece in an hour, which is what some clubs pay us for doing three sets.

"The acoustics can be pretty good down there," he added, "except when trains are coming in. But it doesn't rain on you. The subway is a step up from the street." Fans of Mr Lodico's sextet, it seems, will often pay the subway fare simply to catch the group's platform performances. And, with producers, composers, talent scouts, TV personnel and ordinary party-givers also taking the tube opportunities for further bookings frequently ensue.

A tip, perhaps, for transit authorities round the world.

Tommy Smith

BACK TO FORWARD

ANYBODY WHO HAS been listening to Tommy Smith's work on recent records from Forward Motion and the Gary Burton Group will have had another chance to compare this summer, with both groups playing here. Now based in Boston, Tommy makes a point of getting back to Edinburgh as often as possible, and I asked him how the two groups differed.

"For me, they are very different. I wouldn't think of playing one of my compositions with both groups — it's one or the other, and I know Christian Jacob feels the same way about his piece on Gary's album. I'm a sideman in his band, and I don't have the same control as I do in Forward Motion. On stage, I feel I have to work harder with Gary, because everyone is so good, the group is so professional. You have to play a certain way every night, you have to properly develop your solo in a way that Gary will hear as constructive. You can't just take it where it goes and see what happens."

How conscious are you of these differences when you are actually playing?

"Well, one thing I am conscious of in Gary's band is that half the time I don't feel the other players are listening to me, even though they are so professional. It's really down to the way the sound is set up. I disagree with it, but I don't have a real say, I can't change it. I have to blow very hard all the time to be heard, which makes it hard to do much with dynamics."

Could that apparent lack of listening have something to do with the set structure of the music?

"Possibly, yeah. I'll probably get fired if anybody reads this, but I really do feel they should listen more to what I'm doing. I always like to have a close rapport with the drummer in any band, and I have that with Ian Froman in Forward Motion, to the point where the other two occasionally get pissed off when Ian and I get too far into it, but it's hard to get that with Martin Richards when we can't really hear each other."

"As far as the music goes, Forward Motion is more experimental, more open to variations and trying out different things than is possible with Gary, although we don't do as many open improvisations as we did when Lazlo was in the band. Christian isn't too comfortable with those, but he can read anything any of us care to write."

"With Gary, the set is pretty well defined. Gary will only do things which work every single night, and you really just have to make sure that you have the pieces off when he calls them. In any case, American audiences can't take melancholy pieces: it all has to be jumping, you know, all very positive. With Forward



NICK WHITE

Motion, the music is not so difficult, but it's not so relentlessly up either. There's a much greater contrast within the set."

On a previous visit, Tommy showed me an essay he was writing on the development of his playing. What happened to that?

"I've re-written it again because the English was so bad — I change it every time I learn a bit more about writing as well as a bit more about music. It's really a learning thing, so I keep finding new things to add, but I also find that the more I think about it, the more it feeds back into my playing. It's a useful process."

Are you thinking of publishing it?

"Not really, although Bobby Wishart keeps telling me I should. I've got this other thing, too, some weird chords that I've put scales to, that I've never seen written down before. You only need to know five scales, but from the two minor scales you can build modes which go with some of these strange chords, like C with C sharp on the bass. I showed them to Gary, but he said, 'C'mon, you only need to know five scales — when I come across a chord like B flat with F sharp on the bass, I just say that's *that* sound, that's *this* sound, why put names to them and confuse people? But I have these things all written out, it's really easy to understand.'"

And how about your music writing?

"I'm always writing songs, all the time. What I would really like to do is write some that Gary liked — I wrote 16 new ones between July and December and he didn't like any of them!"

KENNY MATHIESON

In A Latin Groove

MOST THRILLING NEWS this month is BBC TV's acceptance of (my) CELIA CRUZ documentary. Filming starts in June at the Apollo Theatre, where The Queen of Salsa joins TITO PUENTE, JOHNNY PACHECO, WILLIE COLON, and all the other men in her life. An unexpected chance to explore some Cruz history came with an invitation to the 6th International Popular Music Festival in the idyllic Cuban Caribbean resort of Varadero. Five nights of music from eight pm to dawn. Sadly, Cuban bands took second seat to visitors, and IRAKERE, ARTURO SANDOVAL, and GRUPO PROYECTO backed mediocre cabaret singers. Only the Afro-Cuban woman, XIOMARA, showed promise, with a fresh and powerful voice. Star of the week was GILBERTO GIL, who packed Havana's Karl Marx Theatre before moving to the seaside. He brought only a trio: guitar, percussion and himself, with a refreshingly different acoustic set, free from the rock/reggae bias he travels with. Considering that BOB MARLEY is completely unknown in Cuba, the response to "No Woman, No Cry" (In Spanish/Portuguese and English) was overwhelming. The closeness of Afro-Cuban and Brazilian music was clear – hence the fanatical response. Fellow Brazilian MARIA BETHANIA skipped around the stage barefoot, like a faerie, but sang like a samba-diva.



The real action started after midnight: with clubs, hotel gardens, tavernas offering every style of current Cuban music. At the thatched Casillito, ARTURO SANDOVAL displayed a new delicacy in his playing, and MAYRA CALIOAO VALDES (Chucho's sister) gave a too-brief show of her unique vocal style. At Las Cuatro Palmas – Barista's former summer house – the garden was host to a folkloric show of rumba dancing, drumming and chanting. To round the festival off, EGREM records held a launch party for *Varadero 87* – nine tracks recorded during the week, packaged and ready in THREE DAYS! A fine, though selective souvenir of a pleasant way to OD on music.

In Havana, I tracked down MARIO BLANCO, jazz and film write for *Granma* daily, who had written to me at *Wire*. Mario, a charmingly modest 71-year-old, introduced me to a world of older jazz buffs and organisers, for whom *Wire* is compulsory reading. HELEN MITSKUS, a charming woman, ex-model, co-founder of the pre-revolutionary Havana Jazz club, is today a planner for the annual Havana Jazz Festival. Her glamorous



photos with CAB CALLOWAY, STAN GETZ and DIZZY reveal a very different past from today's austerity.

Over in New York, conga player DANIEL PONCE, has broken his four-year silence with *Anave*, to be released on Island's new Antilles label in October. A sneak preview reveals a much funkier, less sparsely ethnic sound than *New York Now*, and a collection of guaranteed hit dancers. Some wonderful fresh solos from TITO PUENTE, PAQUITO D'RIVERA, and the distinctly Jewish-Latin violin sound of LEWIS KHAN. Pianist STEVE SANDBERG arranged Ponce's music with great skill.

In London, Jazz House records will be run from the inner sanctum of Ronnie Scott's club, by Pete King. It launches with *Arturo Sandoval – Live At The Club*, 86, followed by Irakere. Sandoval arrives here August, with Irakere in Sept/Oct and more to follow. The Cuban sound fills the Metropolitan cellar bar every Friday, proving that an all-Latin bill does pay. The worthy *Marxists Today*, NICK and MARTIN, have sent many hundreds of pounds to the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, from their weekly soul-and-Latin nights at the Club Sandino.

SUE STEWARO

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Round Up The Usual Suspects

IN BERLIN ... by the Wall ... peabraind talents walk ten feet tall. A rampantly spoilt consumer playpen inside East Germany, the city encourages its inflated myths to keep

Western marks coming. But some carry pfennigs of truth. Like, West Germans migrate there to dodge national service. Or they get one of the many grants available to those wanting to increase the size of their ego. Fact: There are more cubic metres of ballooning artistic ego, subsidised in inverse ratio to creative output, in West Berlin than anywhere else in the world.

Sadly, little of it goes FRIEDER BUTZMANN's way. Now here is a big man in all senses of the word. His job description is extensive: Concrete musician, electronic composer, discomixer, multi-media performer and art prankster *par excellence*. He should be looked after. Instead he trawls that limited, yet worldwide contemporary arts network that has taken him everywhere – even inside the Arctic Circle – except Britain. To our loss.

We've missed his bizarre ballet that mounted Volkswagen Beetle noise and *Swan Lake* for animated VWs and a ballerina, not to mention his mysterious New York outing as Stravinsky researcher. Part of the former, called "Wolfsburg" after VW Car City BRD, features on his 1985 double LP "Das Mädchen Auf Der Schaukel" (Zensor UK through Rough Trade/Cartel). And the Stravinsky project "Sacra!" (retitled after a Bavarian exclamation) was a collaboration with Thomas Kapielski, with whom he shares his third LP "War Pur War" (Zensor UK). Here continues a fruitful exchange. The genial Lake Constance-born giant Butzmann's occasionally awkward concrete edges are buffed by his Berliner compatriot Kapielski, seemingly a more polished finisher. Alternately describing themselves as Neo-Bébé Teutonic and The Fog'n'Roll Show, they run together distracted mood pieces like "Incendio" – their take on the Ancient Greek siren song – a disco study of stiff-legged East German Volkspolizisten called "Do The Vopo", beacing *Klang Kollagen* and two-handers that maximise the contrast between Butzmann's enchanted High German and Kapielski's splendid *Sprechstimme*.

Butzmann's outlet Zensor promises to release CASPAR (Son Of Peter) BRÜTZMANN'S MASSAKER power trio. It's also the haven for another Constance citizen SANTERRA – recently featured in a BBC2 *Saturday Review* Berlin special. Alone with her accordion she survived the early press tag "Dietrich-Johnny Roeten hybrid" to compel listenings on her own terms. Her songs are breathtakingly direct declamations of desire, independence and loneliness, vigorously counterpointed by the rudimentary chordings and heavings that closely follow the singer's rising and falling passions. Asserting the primacy of expression over commercially fixed rates of exchange, she's as

seditious a composer in her way as Die Tödliche Doris or Einstürzende Neubauten. Her way is similarly cleared of the common currency of popular song, a form reduced to codes and buzznoises, the cracking of which might be distracting, but rarely affecting. Santerra's LP *Oxya* restores the song as a means of communication between composer and listener. Back to basics. A simple revolution turned. Yet one that restores faith in the erratic vitality of Berlin.

BIBA KOPF

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The Sound Of Africa

DROP BY MARRAKESH between July 4 and 12, and you might catch the Swoonsomest Peepers in Pop on the same stage as the Slinksomest Pipes: an eight-day Benefit Festival for the blind, and young TERENCE TRENT D'ARBY (peepers) appearing side-by-side with SALIF KEITA (pipes) of



Mali and Paris. And slotted in between such para-global operators as KID CREOLE, JAN GARRAREK and THE FRANK CHICKENS, a feast of Afro-Parisian luminaries: PAPA WEMBA (the first Zairean to tour Japan), SIPHO MAHUSE (possibly), RAY LEMA and the MUSICIANS OF THE NILE.

As suspected, getting the rumour into print was enough to scotch it. FRANCO didn't play at Glastonbury in the WOMAD field, but if you're quick, you'll catch him supporting PETER GABRIEL at Earl's Court June 27. Gabriel has atoned for several decades of terrible music by his selfless support for WOMAD, and he seems to be turning his shows – the first for about five years – into a little one-man World Music and Dance show, with YOUSOU N'DOUR and Southall's *bbangra* rockers ALAAP also appearing. Actually, exposure to Yousou hasn't left such a bad mark on Gabriel's recent music either. Or else I'm getting old. And mellow. Franco plays a show of

his own at the Brixton Academy on June 28.

SHIRAZI JAZZ have put out *Benga Beat* on World Circuit to follow up their acclaimed UK tour. THE REAL SOUNDS have put out a 12" "Walk For The World" (it continues the score-draw theme on the b-side, three-all this time); there's an LP *Wende Zako* to come, on Cooking Vinyl. AFRICAN DAWN are putting out an LP to follow too long a silence — more on them later, though, especially as I don't know the title yet. And Youssou's new LP will be on WEA. Which means that the brothers Warner are now the major major for African music in the recording world — with LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO, HUGH MASEKELA, THE BHUNDU BOYS just signed. Anyone working on the margins for any length of time will know to be cautious when majors start sniffing around — it's usually a mixed blessing. Let's give them the benefit of the doubt for the moment.

MARK SINKER



To The Beat Of A Club

AS THE SUMMER unfolds it's BAZ FE JAZZ who's dragging the night clubbers out of their after-hours haunts by joining forces with *City Limits* magazine. During June they're presenting a string of Sunday-evening cruises down the Thames that feature live on deck TOMMY CHASE, STEVE WILLIAMSON, FINE LINE and AJAO JAZZ.

On the festival front the Capital Music Festival presents "Jazz on a Summer's Night At The Big Top". From eleven till late, on three successive Tuesdays from June 23rd, Baz will be at the controls in the Tent at Jubilee Gardens, presenting live sets from the Jazz Defektors, Yargo and King Salsa.

Before heading off to the Montreux and North Sea Festivals, GILLES PETERSON is working away feverishly. Besides his regular slots at The Wag on Mondays, Special Branch on Fridays and his laying down the Baptist Beat at the Belvedere on Sundays, he'll be spinning his typically eclectic selection at

'Mambo Madness' — along with CHRIS BANGS — at Fulham Football Club, 9.30 to 2.30 am, July 4th, dropping into the Slammer in Northfleet, Kent on July 26th, and making his usual contribution to the *Do At The Zoo* on the 30th.

For the Soho crowd, the long standing Cutting Edge in Frith St. provides a refuge for those people insane enough to venture into the West End on a Saturday night, while JASON JULES continues to host his Wednesday-night sessions in the crypt at the Limelight. Upstairs they're shuffling to combinations of 'rare grooves' and THE MONKIES while downstairs Jules makes a valiant attempt, against great odds, to create a dive bar ambience by presenting live sessions from some of London's hottest young talent. To ensure entry at a price you can afford (£3), secure yourself a membership card, available throughout June from Ray's Jazz Shop or on request from the Limelight.

North of Watford, COLIN CURTIS is working the Hacienda with the Tommy Chase Quartet (July 8th) and his "Berlin" at the Asylum session, every Tuesday, is still the focus for discerning Mancunian music lovers.

On vinyl BAZ FE JAZZ has been plundering the Argo, Chess and Cadet catalogues to come up with two volumes of dance floor diamonds entitled *Do It Like You Feel It* and *Jam For Boppers*, both set for imminent release by Charley records... not strictly jazz but LARGE on the dancefloor is DAVE HUCKER's *We Got Latin Soul* compilation. Where does one draw the line? I'd say at TOM JONES's "It's Not Usual". Amazed to see JOE SAVAGE in the *Observer* put this middle-aged oldie "at the forefront of the latin-jazz style so popular in the clubs". I was absolutely stunned to hear Gilles flash it at Boogaloo at the Wag. STUNNED!

PAUL BRADSHAW

THIS MONTH'S HARD CHART

1. Milestones — Louie Ramirez (*Tribute To Cal Tjader* — Caiman)
2. Seeds — Sahib Shihab (*Seeds* — Youngblood)
3. Mambo Kayama — Art Pepper (*Art Pepper Today* — Galaxy)
4. Calypso Freddie — Freddie Hubbard (*Sweet Return* — Atlantic)
5. Just One Of Those Things — Lionel Hampton (*Ham* — World Record Club)
6. Selim — Johnny Lytle (*New & Groovy* — Tuba)
7. Gators Groove — Willis Jackson (*In The Alley* — Muse)
8. Reverend Moses — Lou Donaldson (*Baptist Beat* — Blue Note)
9. Better Than Anything — Julie Kelly (*We're On Our Way* — Pausa)

HOB JONES

Club Dates

WHERE IT'S AT THIS MONTH

ASTON Birmingham Barrons Arms (3rd) Annie Whitehead/ Melvyn Poore (10th) Don Weller	Hubbard (19th) Panama Jazz Band, Sheila Collier's Swinghouse, Chicago Teddy Bears, Alan Price (20th) Ian Darrington's Big Band Workshop Humphrey Lyttelton's Band (21st) Sean Tracey Trio, Clark Tracey Quintet (22nd) Louisiana Red, Festival Blues Band (23rd) Don Lusher Big Band (24th) Elaine Delmar, Wigan Youth Jazz Orchestra (25th) Henry Lowther, Munch Manship Quartet Walsall Youth Jazz Orchestra Paul Walker Quartet Barbara Thompson's Paraphernalia	Fingers, Marion Montgomery (25th) Branford Marsalis Quartet Gary Burton Quintet	(30th) Mario Castronari's Roadside Picnic with Dave O'Higgins (31st) Los Rancheros
SOMERSET Bell Inn Ash, Nr Yeovil (12th) Charlie Musselwhite (26th) New Blues Deluxe		London ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL (Foyer: Free) (2nd) Gene Calderazzo Quartet (4th) Taxi Pata Pata (8th) Stanford Band: Modern Jazz (11th) Foreign Press Jazz Cats BASS CLEF Hoxton Sq. (1st) Jim Mullen Quartet (2nd) Julian Arguelles/Simon Purcell Quartet (3rd) Jenny Cardinas (4th) Dudu Pukwana's Zila (5th) John Etheridge Quartet with Steve Franklin (7th) Jonas Hellborg Quartet (8th) Quest (9th) Jonathan Gee Quartet with Mornington Lockett (10th) Cayenne (11th) African Connection (12th) Guildhall Big Band with special guest Jean Toussaint (13th) 29th Street Saxophone Quartet (14th) 29th Street Saxophone Quartet (15th) Steve Berry Trio with Mark Lockheart/Phil Bent Quartet (16th) Andy Sheppard Quartet (17th) Robin Jones' King Salsa (18th) Kintone (21st) Floyd Lloyd and the Top-Ranking Band (23rd-25th) Barida (26th) Arguelles (28th) Noel McCalla's Contact (29th) Weller/Spring Quartet	LOGAN HALL University of London (7th) Cecil Taylor (9th) Allen Toussaint (10th) Alice Coltrane's Coltrane Legacy LE PALAIS Hammersmith (6th) Astrud Gilberto, Flora Purim & Airtio, Asymuth THE SUN 47 Old Town, Clapham (1st) KLM, The Floyd Fowler Garside Trio 100 CLUB Oxford St. (1st) Gene Connors with the Bruce Boardman Band (3rd) The Alan Price Band and Singers with Don Weller (10th) Chris Barber Jazz and Blues Band (13th) Mitch Woods and The Rocket 88s (17th) The Deep Sea Jivers and Pete Thomas (19th) Juice On The Loose (20th) Charlie Musselwhite (22nd) An Evening of Mingus Music PIED BULL 1 Liverpool Rd., N1 (3rd) Tim Whitehead Band (3rd) Juice On The Loose (4th) Somo Somo, African Culture FAIRFIELD HALL Croydon (21st) George Melly/John Chilton's Feetwarmers (15th) Gerry Gold, Eddie Prevost (29th) British Summer Time Ends
TRURO Arts Centre Truro (20-25th) Jazz Week (24th) Jazz Ball Band, Truro City Hall			
BAYH The Ram, Wiccombe (5th) Riverside Jazzmen (12th) Radio Syncopators (26th) Severn Jazzmen			
BRISTOL Albert Inn (5th) Terry Drummond and Grapevine (12th) Jumpin' Jive (19th) Thinks Jazz (26th) Anselm/Whiteside Quartet	FEAR TREE HOTEL Frog Lane (20th) Taillfer Brothers Texas Swing Band RASSLES Millgate (21st) Shirley Patterson All- Stars GRAND HOTEL Dorning (21st) Chris Williams Jazz Workshop (22nd) Gateway Jazz Roadshow (23rd) Latin Percussion Workshop (24th) Joe Palam, Lars Erstrand (25th) Dees Knuffs Wallgate (22nd) Free Parking GFMS Upper Disconson St (23rd) Kenny Baker and Stan Barker Trio (24th) Munch Manship Quartet CAMBRIDGE Corn Exchange, Market Sq (24th) Loose Tubes, Itchy		
BRISTOL Community Festival (11-12th) Jazz Stage, Ashton Court DEVON Verbein Manor (10th) Charlie Musselwhite DORSET Anelophe (7th), (21st) Sunset Cafe Stompers			
BIRMINGHAM Midland Arts Centre Cannon Hill Park (9th) Dave Liebman's Quest (11th) The Guest Stars BIRMINGHAM Baltimore Bron Bar Scratchallen Hotel (5th) The 2-Band (12th) The Don Ellis Connection Octet WIGAN Mill At The Pier, Wigan Complex (18th) Mark Gillbanks Big Band Sounds 18, Freddie			



STEVE SWALLOW

S P E A K U P

HOW A LATE BLOOMER
CAME DOWN TO THE FRONT
OF THE BANDSTAND.

WORDS: MIKE ZWERIN

PHOTOS: NICK WHITE

S

TEVE SWALLOW is rising from the deep and moving up front. It has to do with personality evolution.

He has always looked at bass playing as a service occupation, and while a recent *Time* cover story held that the service sector in the US is not what it used to be, Swallow insists: "My service is as good as ever, if not better."

He beat Jaco Pastorius for first place in last year's *Down Beat* readers' poll. For years they have been alternating in first and second place in the polls. But while Pastorius is habitually up-stage, often bare-chested, Swallow has felt that "the back of the bandstand with a good drummer to keep you company is a wonderfully comfortable place".

Bassists can be compared to blocking linemen in American football. Laying down the bottom is an essential, often thankless, service for more visible stars. Swallow does not want to lose this "social function" which attracted him to the bass in the first place. Some of his strongest musical memories are "16-bar passages that Jimmy Garrison played in the middle of a 45-minute Coltrane solo. All of a sudden you're all his." He is still "intrigued by the possibility of influencing people by oblique statement and by inference, without addressing them forthrightly".

At the same time, however, he's "become more interested in being on top, if you should pardon the allusion. I want to play more lines, more solos, use the upper register. I'm intrigued by the possibility of stepping forthrightly to the front of a crowded room and beginning to bellow."

The movement up from the back of the bandstand, and its accompanying modified social functions, can be traced to his switch from acoustic to electric bass 16 years ago. Swallow had played with Jimmy Giuffrè, Sean Gerz, Art Farmer and Zoot Sims and came to the attention of a wider public in the late 60s with Gary Burton's quartet, which utilised rock elements before most other jazz groups, and for which Swallow wrote standards such as "General Mojo's Well Laid Plan" and "Portsmouth Figurations".

He was one of the first respected jazz bassists to go electric. The flash came when Burton opened for Cream at Fillmore West. "I mean they were hot," Swallow recalls: "I was overwhelmed by Jack Bruce's first note. Like, he was talking straight to me. Jack was the reason I switched to bass guitar."

Swallow's reputation was so strong that acoustic purists were more puzzled than critical. He broke in his new axe working

with singer Jack Jones in Las Vegas: "The chance to stay in a hotel room practising month after month and just report downstairs by elevator to play a couple of sets every night was irresistible. It's the most intense practising I've ever done."

The amplifier enabled him "to get closer to a legaro Charlie Christian-Lester Young-type phrasing," he told *Musican* magazine: "My belief is that it's possible to have a bass guitar that is effectively an acoustic instrument, that vibrates like a violin, but which may be successfully amplified. The instrument is built for my sound, the voice I've been seeking to realise since I began learning the upright. My ideal is Marvin Gaye. That's it. What an instrument! If I could phrase like that I'd be perfectly content."

He smiles as he calls himself a "late bloomer". It's taken him "awhile" to act on the implications of the switch. And "despite a constant temptation to just fold back into the rhythm section, what has happened is I think on the scale of intimations of mortality. I feel a cold wind at the back of my neck. If I don't speak up soon, I'll have blown it."

The move up and front also involves "an implied basic philosophical shift" with regard to improvisation. He realised that the amplifier was part of his instrument, that the instrument was not this thing he held in his hands but in fact stretched several feet across the room with a cord.

Once he accepted that fact it was inevitable to proceed to the point where he is now "confronting" electronic sound-altering devices like delays, reverb units, speaker magnets, noise gates, compressors and oral exciters. Studio technology led Swallow to realise that "jazz is no longer merely a product of the moment, but also of reflection. It's a process that lies somewhere between improvisation and composition. I am of course aware that

French intellectuals will have problems accepting this. It's not very existential."

THE READER MAY have noticed that Swallow's syntax is a cut more lucid than average. This can be accounted for by a finishing school (Choate) and Ivy League (Yale) education ("I mean I'm talking *white*"), followed by extensive serious reading. He lives in Guilford, Conn, but spends most of his time in Woodstock, which he calls "Tin Pan Forest", working in Carla Bley's basement studio. After being associated for over 20 years, they have recently grown "very tight. She's done a lot to get me to present myself full-faced to the world. I'm determined to do the same for her. She's horribly insecure. She's the best soloist of 1986, if I had that award to give."

Having become a "firm believer in synthetic processes", Swallow sees "no reason to assume that the whole cloth of absolute improvisation is the best. There's nothing wrong with remembering aspects of what you played before and working with those materials. There's a kind of winnowing process. In the studio I'll spend a whole day on a solo, transcribing what seems valuable from a first take, writing new material away from the instrument, trying it again, erasing and replacing phrases, re-recording them up or down an octave, starting from scratch, finally going to sleep after 14 hours' work and waking up and scrapping it all."

The recording studio has always involved "an intimidating adversary situation" for Swallow. To escape that, "the trick is to get the producer out of the booth. One way to do it is to become the producer, which I've done. Finally figured that one out. Then if you can remove the engineer, there you are. I'm working on that now. Push your own buttons, call your own shots. It's exhilarating. Try it sometime."

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GRAFTON BOOKS

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Company

ARTS THEATRE
LONDON

TEN YEARS ON, Derek Bailey put together another Company, another week where improvising tested itself and its players. These events manage some strange combination of the transitory and the definitive: there are moments from the six concerts I attended which I will never forget, and yet — writing this a couple of days after it all ended, and without the benefit of notes — I find the exactness of who played with who and when and just what happened already seems to have slipped away.

Company events can be motley affairs, after all. There are always combinations from the whole ensemble that plainly won't work, others where the sonic affinities are too close to afford much interesting interplay, others where some detail — an ending played past, or some kind of interruption — spoils an otherwise valuable music. And there is one's own state: if a personal tiredness or bad temper or lack of receptivity intrudes, the music can seem like so much pointless scratching.

Yet this Company succeeded in overcoming most of these things for most of the time. The nine musicians looked an

unlikely crew, and their unexpected compatibilities were something of a wonder. A few larger ensembles were put together, but the majority of groupings were in twos and threes and sometimes fives, which a pragmatic player usually finds to be the best. None of the evenings dragged; the theatre was acoustically excellent; most marvellous of all, there were healthy and enthusiastic audiences every night, with the final three evenings not far short of a sell-out. No wonder Bailey looked pleased.

It's debatable whether the device of introducing the Company members over the course of the week was the ideal course. Practical considerations

may have made this essential, but sometimes it felt as though we were getting a preponderance of Barre Phillips and Steve Noble (who both began on Monday) and not enough of Carlos Zangaro (who began later). Han Bennink didn't arrive till Saturday, but a little of this delightful man does, after all, go a long way.

It did, though, throw each individual into a clearer light than sometimes happens. Perhaps only Bailey himself came through the week relatively 'unexposed'. Each of the other eight had some nakedness about them which went on to tell us more about their attitudes to the group improvisations and set a few unfamiliar characters in a state of easier interpretation. Maybe

this introductory element helped to keep the audience strong; there was a sense of the week being an education, rather than an experts-only invasion to an already commatted following.

Surely everyone enjoyed themselves. Lee Konitz, the least likely participant, seemed to be bemused and intrigued in roughly equal measure by what was going on around him. His solo sequence, where he finished by playing along to a tape of one of his old records, was oddly unsatisfying, but with Bailey and Richard Teitelbaum he lit on many felicities. Barre Phillips was often whimsical too, but he is a fine and sadly neglected bassist whose huge vocabulary on the instrument was absorbing at every turn.



Company Illustrated by FIONA HAWTHORNE



The two drummers, Steve Noble and Han Bennink, played a duet at one point with the dancer Katie Duck doing her best to keep up. It was as exhausting and exhilarating as all of Bennink's music. His typically madcap solo piece was loudly cheered: after his Camden appearance, it seems as though Han is finally gathering a legion of hardcore fans. For Noble, this must have been an instructive week. In some of the music he was involved with, Steve kept trying to do too much, extending and over-inflating passages that called for less, not more. But his eagerness and energy go with an amusingly deadpan manner, which makes him an excellent foil for the imperturbable Bailey.

Ms Duck and Tristan Honsinger put together a pretty hilarious duo piece, which ended up with Katie on cello and Tristan on dance. Some whispered to me a fear that the cellist is actually a little mad, and there were certainly crazed expressions galore from this unsettling man. I expect he knows what he's doing. Most sober presence probably belonged to Richard Teitelbaum, who sat hardly moving behind his console of computers and electronics. The sensitivity and apeness of his playing was, nevertheless, a marvel. The amazing rainforest of sound he conjured in a duet with Konitz left me speechless.

Above all, Carlos Zingaro. The violinist wasn't fazed by anything any of his colleagues had to serve up, yet he re-

mained completely himself, a pure-toned, almost classical player, hurling our great spirals of sound or scratching away at the tiniest shape. I thought Phil Wachsmann had set the highest standard of improvised violin, but Zingaro is more flamboyant, more lyrical, more persuasive in his legion of styles.

And Derek enjoyed himself. The final nine-piece blow-out was daft, but a nice way to celebrate a great week.

MIKE FISH

Buddy Guy & Junior Wells

QUEENS HALL
EDINBURGH

"WE'RE GONNA PLAY a little of this, a little of that," Buddy Guy predicted. "This" and "that" were, of course, all blues, wonderfully played by the masters of the Chicago style, and paced brilliantly from the moment of the guitarist's explosive entry to the final departure of the drummer beating a lonely snare after the band had dismantled his kit for him.

For the early part of a long set, it was just Buddy Guy and the four-piece backing group — a nice small number (no getting weighed down in heavy

arrangements) but even the single sax seemed superfluous. A speciality was the slow blues with plenty of expressive contrast between quiet (once, even, unamplified) passages and emotional outbursts. Of course, showmanship was integral — Buddy aroused us with a purely instrumental blues played on tip-toe with his guitar held flat, then built up the audience's excited anticipation for a delayed entry by "Mr Junior Wells". The senior partner strutted on, a picture of sartorial elegance in dark suit and white tuxedo, and toted a harmonica which he played jammed tight against the microphone.

These two have been together a long time, of course (since 1958) — though for elder statesmen in their 50s their energy was astonishing. Rhetoric, gesture and stylised argument showed a neat contrast — the taunt, strutting harmonica-player and the loping, more easy-going guitarist. Now that their Chicago mentor Muddy Waters is gone, the duo are the leading representatives of the grittier, electric, urban blues — undiluted by more commercial styles.

Of course, this is a good-time music that is hard to over-analyse — though Buddy Guy is a sophisticated and technically brilliant guitarist

by any standard (and it still seems amazing how this simple, mainly 12-bar form supports such endless variation). On "It's Still Called The Blues", Junior broke his habitual nervous pacing for some gentle boogying, which was taken up by some of the enthusiastic capacity audience. Let's hope the size and response of the audience will be noted by Platform when they plan next year's Edinburgh programme!

BLIND LEMON HAMILTON

Horn Web Saxophone Quartet

COCONUT GROVE
LEEDS

ROVA

TRADES CLUB
LEEDS

THE ATTRACTION of the sax quartet for those interested in composition is probably the ease with which a group consisting entirely of "lead" instruments can shift between charts and improvisation. Most groups have problems enough finding a drummer who can keep time, let alone negotiate the black pages favoured by the present-day composer. With four saxophones precise notation can give way to rhapsodic testifi-

ing in a split second.

The Horn Web Sax Quartet seize these possibilities with both hands. Their compositions are bravely abstract, resisting the temptation to burlesque offered by the line-up. Today atonality seems to have lost its power to shock, often figuring as mere nostalgia, an endless homesick wittering. The Horn Webs, however, use atonality to contrast blocks of sound. A four-sax chord is rare in itself, an aural bath: it was dizzying to hear Martin Archer's cascading soprano peel off from the shiny skyscraper of the other horns in unison. Such an approach transforms repetition – no longer a melodic dead end, it becomes instead a slab of sonic material abutted to the other figures.

The Honous Monk is the bridge between cubist construction and the blues, and the Horn Webs' compositions show that they've learnt from playing his tunes. Whereas Archer favours clean, neoclassical lines – keening, lemon-fresh – Nigel Manning lets rip on the blues, wailing on clarinet and swaggering on tenor, his flute notably unsymphonic, punching out funky bebop licks. Derek Saw contributed a violent, low-register outing on alto while cooing his body into a balletic, stork-like posture worthy of Merce Cunningham. The climax for me was "Oscillators" where Manning

and Archer locked into a tenor/soprano battle and Saw and Vic Middleton blew alto and baritone at each other (only Archer kept to a single instrument – his soprano – throughout, though he also has a line in wry introductions). This free explosion was admirably prepared for by their clear, prismatic compositions – they're young, still fairly ragged and overflowing with enthusiasm.

ROVA Sax Quartet have been playing together for ten years – this was their last (and only British) date for a tour that took in Russia, Italy and Germany. ROVA favour extended compositions that fold different tunes and sections together, sometimes approaching the torrent of invention that marks the music of Anthony Braxton. Eight weeks has built up their stamina and they played a long set. Jon Raskin is a formidable baritone player, spurring the group with expertly handled rhythmic kicks – his alto contributions were alarmingly, refreshingly crazy. On "The Web" (the name's a coincidence – an image thrown up spontaneously by the sound of four interweaving saxophones, I suppose) ROVA came nearest to free improvisation, but never quite broke from the symphonic concept – the free interludes always seemed mere illustrations to the grand design. Bruce Ackley wore the best shirt (black and white

geometric whorls) but his soprano tended towards classical arpeggios or trad conventions. Lawrence Ochs achieved some Ayleish tenor in one number, though the tune (the kind of mock-pomp favoured by Carla Bley and Robert Wyatt – they'd use Gary Windo) made sure the sound was subordinate to the whole.

I sometimes wondered if ROVA had got the relation of the score to improvisation quite right. There was a fumbling between sections, the kind of bathos/lack of stage presence I associate with pauses between movements at classical gigs. The quality of the music is heavily dependent on the charts – a slow number was wearisome, Gavin Bryars without the harmonic eccentricity, whereas another could be engulging and fascinating.

ROVA sent us all out chuckling with an uptempo number, whereas the Horn Webs were too puffed to use much of the Coconut Grove's extensive licensing hours. I suppose ROVA are a Mercedes compared to the Horn Webs' Austin Minor – but it all depends where you want to go. I found ROVA's power and control impressive, but listened harder to the pushy, bluesy edge of the Horn Webs – sometimes shambolic, but able to speak straight out.

BEN WATSON

Gil Evans

HAMMERSMITH ODEON

"WHAT A GALAXY of talent!" What can you say? It was of course disappointing that the other two members of the mutual appreciation triumvirate did not play. We all hoped but never really expected Miles Davis would be there and although David Sanborn was a more likely guest – it would have been nice to hear him revisit his classic "Angel" solo – kid brother Chris Hunter (same sound, same stance, same suit but with his own way of constructing a solo) was no let-down.

The music peaked early and didn't quite sustain that pitch of inspiration, but what the hell? This was an occasion, balloons and all. How does Gil do it? How to define even *what* he does? Shaman-like he smiles wanly or makes magically passes in the air, and the sounds are transformed. Colours mix and spill, rhythms are scattered and yet still fit the matrix, textures collide, mend, meld, match and move on to pandemonium through chaos until, instantaneously, like a reverse-run film of a shattered ornament the shards and splinters leap together, and the twittering, scraping, scuttering behind the skirting resolves into stabbing bop standards or Mingusian memories.

Lots of Mingus for openers with Steve Lacy wiring in first, warming the engine. Next thing you know old George Adams is over the fence and out of the park. In an evening of splendidly ill-mannered homages no one was more gloriously outrageous than Adams, although John Surman goaded the baritone into some far-flung places in his one solo.

Hiram Bullock was quite subdued. The perambulations were confined to the stage. In recent weeks he had toured the Odeon with Sanborn and the Shaw with Carla Bley, hurling chants from his radio-miked axe from all quarters of the house, but tonight he properly mellowed down in deference to the evening belonging to Gil. He didn't escape, however, hooded and quizzical glances from under the guest tenor's famous hat. Local hero Don Weller surveyed much of the proceedings with mock bemusement before, during and after his pithy, pith-taking choruses in the spotlight.

The van-coloured lighting of the stage was superfluous. Gil's smears of sound hung over the auditorium like a viscous cascade or Aural Borealis. They slithered down to form mysterious pools of harmony, and in the depths, echoplexing his triple-tongued chops muscles, Palle Mückleborg darted like some oft-



Gil passes through

ANDREW POTHECARY

suspected, rarely-glimpsed exotic creature.

Gil presided calmly as his charges poured preposterous ingredients into the blender, knowing that if they didn't shape up (but they would) he'd pull it together with a single stirring of those expressive hands. For Van Morrison's brief appearance the bigswung faces were on in preparation for three or four risible bug affec-

tionate versions of "Happy Birthday" the first of which, savaged by Adams's tenor, wouldn't have been recognised by its own mother if she'd not noticed the odd tell-tale chord or cadence George was kicking across the floor.

Here's to the next 75 years.

BARRY WITHERDEN

Recollections Of The Future

THOSE MANY READERS who are anxious to hear every note of contemporary music they possibly can often write in complaining that numerous contemporary music events, including whole festivals, go unmentioned here. And they are right. The problem lies in persuading the relevant organisations to send information in time to meet the fierce *Wire* deadlines. We have used various approaches, such as ringing them up and trying to frighten them with heavy breathing. But this technique proved no more successful than when I employed it in one of my many attempts to get my name removed from the *Jazz Express* Free List.

Of course, the situation has its advantages from my viewpoint. The fact that details of this year's Almeida Festival arrived too late for last month's issue meant that I was able to avoid writing about all the rubbish by world-class superbores HANNS EISLER, mainly with emetic BRECHT texts, that litter this year's programme. Actually, a few events at the Almeida Theatre (which obviously is in Almeida Street, London N1) have spilled over into July. Indeed on the first day of this month, under the genial regis of the Society for the Promotion of New Music, the Delta Saxophone Quartet performs ANTHONY ADAMS's minimalist "2 + 2", DAVID VICKERMAN BEDFORD's "Fridolf Kennings" (which requires the quartet to play 12 instruments at once), PETER-JAN WAGEMANS's "Saxafon Kwartet" and a piece by JAMES HARLEY suspiciously titled "Jazz".

Remain in your seats afterwards because the Almeida Theatre stages a second concert on the night of July 1. This has Elise Ross singing songs by IVES, SCHOENBERG, WEILL, SAMUEL BARBER and (damsel) EISLER's "Zeitungsschnur". On July 2 at Union Chapel a brisk walk down Upper Street from the Almeida Theatre - there is a concert mainly of American pieces, including JOHN CROWNING's "Stria", STEVE REICH's "New York Counterpoint" and some of CONLON NANCARROW's eerily fascinating Studies for Player-Piano. Again at Union Chapel on July 3 MICHEL WASSVIZ's "Touch Monkeys" has its UK premiere. This sophisticated electro-acoustic work comes at you from eight loudspeakers, and is said to have caused a sensation among the normally phlegmatic Dutch.

Wassviz's "Monkeys" should bring the Almeida Festival to a suitably resounding conclusion. And talking of festivals, Cheltenham, now in its 43rd year, was originally devoted to contemporary music but has since become mainstream and respectable. The newer music can still be found there, however, and scattered through this year's schedules are considerable numbers of works by the Norwegian FARTEN VALEN, the centenary of whose death falls this year, and ALAIN LOUVIER, this year's Composer in Residence. He was born in Paris in 1945, and I like in particular the sound of his "Etudes Pour Agresseurs", of which he will perform the British premiere in the Pitville Pump Room on July 12. First, though, Louvier will give a chat about this and his other works being performed at Cheltenham.

THERE ARE ONLY three other purely contemporary

events there this year, the least of these being a programme by Equale Brass in the Pitville Pump Room on July 15. This presents LOUVIER's Cinq Pièces, JOHN WALLACE's MOOSE DANCES, MARCEL LANDOWSKI's "Blanc Et Feu" and the world premiere of DAVID VICKERMAN BEDFORD's "For Tess". Those who arrive late and leave early will fare best at this concert for it begins and ends with pieces concocted by TIM SOUSTER. Let us just bow our heads in silence at the thought that one of these is based on the Beach Boys' "All Summer Long". Also to be noted in this bracket is the world premiere of JOHN TAVENER's dramatic cantata "Eis Thanaton" at Cheltenham College Chapel late (well, 10.15 pm) on July 5.

The main happening, though, will be the world premiere of JUDITH WEIR's opera "A Night At The Chinese Opera", at the Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham, on July 8, followed by another performance on July 11. Everybody knows such pieces as Miss Weir's "Sketches From A Bagpiper's Album" (*stop mentioning this one, Max - Ed*) but this is only her second opera. Its libretto is based on a Chinese Yuan play which tells of a Chinese canal builder who attends a production of a play and observes that its first half closely mirrors his own life thus far. He surmises that the play's second half will parallel the remainder of his life, and is further convinced of this by several things that happen to him soon after he has seen the play. Then he begins to take steps to avoid what the play has led him to expect will be his fate. But these precautions lead him to do the one thing he was determined not to do...

To balance this Chinese story in an interpretation that is the product of British brains, British skill, British initiative, which no doubt will make a forceful appeal to the British temperament, there is an evening of actual Chinese music in the Pitville Pump Room on July 9. This features the soprano Zhuo Si Mi, the Guo Brothers on Chinese flutes, and Li Li Shan, an exponent of the Pi-p'a, a sort of Chinese lute.

Quite a number of other world and UK premieres can be unearthed from the Cheltenham programmes, among which the most rewarding may be that of ANTHONY GILBERT's String Quartet No. 2 in the Pitville Pump Room on July 7. KENNETH LEIGHTON's "Earth, Sweet Earth" at the same place on the previous day should also be noted, and JEAN FRANCAIX's Piano Trio on July 11. There are considerable quantities of ROUSSEL, RAVEL, PIERNE, WIDOR, VIERNE and even GERSHWIN, the 50th anniversaries of all of whose deaths fall this year. Evidently 1937 was a bad year, like most others.

Meanwhile back in London, at the alleged centre of things, there is only one South Bank event to report, a so-called Shakespeare Gala Concert by the BBC Philharmonic under Edward Downes at the Festival Hall on July 10. But, with P. MAXWELL DAVIES's "Fool's Fanfare", BIRTWISTLE's "Full Farhom Five" and the European premiere of something called "Plump Jack, Scene I" by GORDON GETTY, this is nothing much.



Q U A R T E T

New music soothes the heat of summer.

On the next few pages we showcase some of the names and faces responsible for the new music of the moment.

Four players who make up our summer quartet.

CLEVELAND WATKISS is undertaking vocal duties in the new band Jazz Train, after working with Courtney Pine and The Jazz Warriors, among others. He's taking vocal improvisation from a hard bop base to a post-Coltrane extreme.

ANITA CARMICHAEL plays saxophone and sings. She has her own band that's gigging around London, as well as a regular Monday night slot at the Brahms and Liszt in Covent Garden. Anita is at work on a commercial deal and says she is nothing but busy. A witty and engaging player worth watching.

IKELER has been bassman with a number of outfits, most recently the Steve Williamson group. He stood in with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers at their Camden appearance some weeks ago and marked out his own ground even in that august setting. Ike plays clear and rock-solid.

RAIN BALLAMY is acknowledged as one of our best new saxophonists. Besides his own group, he works as a member of Loose Tubes and Earthworks and is interested in many playing projects. Recent sets suggest that he's honing his alto style to a new, ferocious edge.







ABOVE: Iain Ballamy by Nick White

LEFT: Anita Carmichael by Michael Woolley



ABOVE: Ike Leo *by Mark Dowd*

RIGHT: Cleveland Watkiss *by Stephen Speller*





STEVE COLEMAN

A SINGLE MIND

THE POLITICS OF SAXOPHONE IN ALL FIVE ELEMENTS.

PHOTO: LIAM WOON WORDS: STEVE LEWIS

S

TEVE COLEMAN'S is one of those classic jazz stories of the single-minded application of talent making things happen. And there have been no leg-ups, he can claim no kinship with Ornette or

George. If there is a musical parentage it's Parker, a legacy donated like a time bomb by his own father.

"My family aren't musical though there was music in the house. My mother listened to Billie Holiday, my brothers and sisters had James Brown on and my father's favourite was Charlie Parker. I didn't pay any of it much attention though. I wanted to be an artist. I wanted to draw comic books. If you want the honest

truth, I started on saxophone because of a girl. I'd played violin in school for a couple of years but there was this girl who played saxophone. I wanted her to notice me so I changed and asked her to teach me."

It worked but he turned out as interested in the means as the end. Mother bought him his own instrument and he started playing in funk bands, taking Maceo Parker for a role model.

"I didn't pay any attention to improvising until I got to high school. I wanted to play in the band there. I was the only black and the teacher said, 'Well, if you're black you must know how to improvise. If you can't you're not in.' I thought I'd better find out so I looked in the records I'd brought with me and found this Bird album my Dad had slipped in."

The time bomb detonated and Coleman buried himself in nrrnithology.

"For a year and a half no one else existed. I got hold of all the records. Slowed them down to 16 to hear what was going on, wrote it all down, practised them. I read all about him and did everything he did, everything except the drugs. You know, playing 'Cherokee' in all the keys. Everyone else was shit, I didn't want to know."

THOUGH HE CAME out of that isolation and began to appreciate first Rollins, Cannonball and Coltrane and then the rest of the jazz canon, that kind of single-minded immersion is bound to leave a mark and it's certainly Parker I think of when I hear Coleman's alto — that

kind of poised heat. There's no question of imitation, just that the idea of a contemporary Parker is a useful analogy for the sound, there's certainly nothing of Ornette there and not much of Coltrane either. In fact, he's probably more solidly embedded in the tradition than either of the Marsalis brothers, which may seem a queer point when you consider the funk and electro feel of much of Five Elements. But we're jumping — back to that story-book.

"I came to New York when I was 21. May 20th 1978."

The single mind commemorates another turning point. He'd grown up and begun to learn his craft in Chicago, meeting and watching the likes of Bunky Green and Von Freeman, whom he rates as improvisers of the highest calibre. Eventually he seemed to reach a ceiling there. "Chicago's a blues and funk town really. They like their jazz traditional. I wanted to go further out."

Hadn't the AACM had any influence?

"They'd all gone by this time. To New York. Just a few stragglers left who couldn't play. That's what I thought AACM was. Every time I met some cat who said he was AACM it seemed like he couldn't play. Only when I got to New York and met Lester Bowie and Muhal did I get any idea of what they'd been about."

So he arrives in the Apple, knowing no one, staying at the Y, giving himself the whole of the summer to make a space there. He plays on the streets in the day, makes a nuisance of himself at night,

sitting in on every jam, with every rehearsal band he can find, hanging around with a vengeance: "I bugged people to death!" Come the autumn, he's playing in the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis band and with other big bands led by Sam Rivers and by Cecil Taylor, a whole lot of big bands for someone who assumed the genre was extinct. It wasn't long before he found the small-group set-up he was really after in the shape of a trio led by drummer Doug Hammond and completed by cellist Abdul Fatah. Steve clearly has a lot of respect for Hammond and the time he spent with him; he persuaded Dave Holland to use some of his tunes when the bass player asked Coleman to join his quartet.

"Dave says he noticed me playing with Sam Rivers but it wasn't until we met at Willisau, where I was playing with a thirteen-piece saxophone band, that Dave mentioned this band. People are always talking about the bands they're getting together but he rang me back in New York. He was up in Woodstock. I thought, that's one hell of a long way to go to rehearse."

Seems the trip proved worthwhile. They discovered they had a lot of musical ideas in common, a common range of influences and approaches to composition. And all this common ground has helped to engender one of the most vibrant and distinctive bands currently together, as anyone who caught their recent short tour will testify. Being in such a band, still less being one of its prime movers, has done his career no harm at all. It certainly

brought him to the attention of those European record companies which record so much good American music. Does that bug him, having to go outside the States to record?

"It doesn't bug me, I just deal with it. It's all I've known, after all. In the States there are some small companies who think they're like that but they're not. There's a type of integrity these guys have, they'll make a record they know they're gonna lose on just because it's good. It's part of that whole thing of treating the music as an art form. When you play in the States, particularly for blacks, you're serving a function, you're part of the event. Here the music is the focus, you *are* the event. Even the journalists are different!"

On the other hand, Europe weren't so keen when they approached Steve to make a record and he offered them Five Elements, a long-standing band of New York compatriots.

"We use synths and electric bass and play a lot of funky material. They weren't happy about that. So I had these tunes I wanted to do acoustic and we agreed on that."

The evidence is on the superb *Motherland Pulse*. An album of mostly his own tunes, mostly done by the quartet; a set of very individual musicians playing some very distinctive tunes, it's strong and rooted music yet subtle and polished too. Making the record taught him a lot and not just about music.

"The sleeve notes are complete bullshit. I took one look at them and thought, right, no more sleeve notes, that's what

interviews are for. And I hated the cover, I hated the Five Elements cover too." So he's involving himself in the design of the next Five Elements cover, already recorded and due for release about now. He plans to produce the one after himself and is taking more of a hand in the business end of his own career. "In the States the only way to promote this music is to know about pop and how that's done."

Hence Five Elements?

"That's not a pop band. There's so much improvisation in what we do you have to call it jazz. Although, yeah, when we started off everyone was into this punk thing. We'd say we were a punk band to get a gig and they'd believe us. We say we're new wave or funk and they believe us. We've even got rock promoters who want to put us on!"

Five Elements is an eight-piece with Coleman, Smith and Allen joined by Cassandra Wilson, Graham Haynes and Mark Johnson, who also played on *Motherland Pulse*, plus Kevin Bruce Harris's funky slap bass and helpings of Kelynn Bell's guitar and voice. They funk, they rap, they compute, they even do a delightful cover of the Bunky Green/Abbey Lincoln tune "Little One I'll Miss You". They have a distinct character which is funk at heart but nothing like the free funk of the harmolodicians, as you might expect; closer to *Tutu* though not as dense or electronic, but at its most rewarding when the lead soloists are to the fore. Their first album seemed to some to mark a change of direction for Steve, a charge he sternly refutes.

"It's because *Motherland Pulse* and the stuff with Dave came out first and, you know, you get identified with what people hear first. He's like this but now he's like that. But Five Elements was around well before I put *Motherland Pulse* together, even before Dave. And it's all the same anyway. I believe that. I listen to King Oliver and to Prince and I hear the same culture evolving. I like what George Lewis is doing with computers. I might do something like that. Dave and I hope to make an album of acoustic duos.

"It's all the same. Despite the fuss that some people make about electronics killing the music. The same things were said when they first started playing pianos. My sax isn't natural, it's a mechanical contraption. They're all just things built by people. Tools for trying to tell how I see things, to express that inner feeling. I practise my technique and study theory. They're tools too, like a grammar I use to translate my feelings accurately."

You can tell he's beginning to relish having reached that stage in his career where he can more readily translate the products of his singleminded talent into gainful employment. After the tour the Holland quintet will be recording an album, then he's most looking forward to a trip to Japan to set up work for Five Elements. I suspect they'll end up believing whatever he tells them.

SOME RECORDS
Dave Holland Quintet: *Songs Of Time* (ECM 1292)
Steve Coleman: *Motherland Pulse* (JMT 850001)
Five Elements: *On The Edge Of Tomorrow* (JMT 860005)



THELONIOUS MONK

Brilliant Corners

WORDS: RICHARD COOK

PAINTING: NEIL PRESLEY

A DISCUSSION OF THE CLASSIC RIVERSIDE RECORDINGS.

FIVE YEARS HAVE passed since Thelonious Monk's death, yet his presence seems more powerful with every passing tribute. Now that jazz improvisation has touched every conceivable extreme, we have embarked into an era where the jazz composer is calling most of the shots. It would be appropriate if Monk, always the most modern of composers, were to be the soul of the movement.

But Monk is a problem as a leader. His music, ubiquitous as it has become, is inseparable from the behatted, awkward enigma who is no longer here. The sentimental tributes offered to Ellington or Basie aren't wholly misplaced because their music contains a certain sentimental warmth. Out of Monk's entire oeuvre, only "Round Midnight" — which is on the verge of becoming a "Moonlight Serenade" for an audience too young to remember its original setting — can fit that particular direction. The respectful impulse behind A & M's *That's The Way I Feel*

Now compilation scuppered the project before it even started: even though some of the selections were suitably irreverent, they missed the terse, serious heart of Monk's work.

One has to go back to the master himself. After Mosaic's comprehensive collection of his Blue Note discs comes *The Complete Riverside Recordings*, 22 records packed into a handsome grey-black and gold box. There is a booklet with some rare as well as the well-known photos of Monk, plus an essay by Orrin Keepnews and that gentleman's invaluable notes on each individual session (Keepnews produced virtually all of them). Playing through it all is a demanding task because there's so little bright and easy-going music here. As uncluttered as Monk's tunes are, not one of them is uncomplex. Even a blues like "Misterioso" has some subtlety, some slant of surprise, that upsets the quiet life of a hard bopper. His music is uniquely dense and satisfying but it is also troubling — because Monk proposes a hardship, a certain cruelty, that even such Promethean figures as Charlie Parker and Charles Mingus weren't quite privy to.

Monk begins at a point where everything has already been

pared away. If the artist's path is one that leads through refinement to essentials, then Monk commences at what would be journey's end for many. Consider a ballad like "Ruby My Dear". The theme, built in rising fifths, has a glum sincerity about it; the third measure of the 32 bars is so offhand that it seems to have strayed in from some other train of thought altogether. The tag at the end is a cunning resolution, because it seems to signal that another chorus must inevitably follow: the theme sounds ready to recur endlessly, like something mathematical. "Ruby My Dear" is the sort of piece one expects to prepare after a lifetime of research, yet it's early Monk, originally set down at one of his first Blue Note sessions in the late 1940s.

THERE ARE THREE versions of "Ruby" among the 44 album sides here. Two were recorded very near each other, and they make an absorbing comparison because each is by tenor sax, Monk and rhythm. The first is with Coleman Hawkins (June 1957): Hawk snarls his way through the piece, challenged but irritable, a veteran at his grittiest and least accommodating. John Coltrane, who was actually in attendance when Hawkins cut his rendition, made his own attempt one month later: he sounds humble by comparison, not quite the noble titan he would become. His statement of the theme is respectful and subservient to Monk's characteristically belted chords, and his improvisations sound almost tentative (especially next to his work on the other two tunes of the date, "Nutty" and "Trinkle Tinkle", where he's as garrulous as usual). It's at this moment that one suddenly hears where he might have conceived "Naima", a piece not so different to Monk's gentle idea.

As diverse and fascinating as those two "Ruby"s are, Monk's solo version (October 1958) is the one that unlocks the secret of the piece. This "Ruby" is almost lighthearted next to the others: in most hands the song would end up maudlin, but the composer's embellishments manage to extract a sweetness from the core,

his accents making the melody skip. The snatch of boogie woogie bass in the bridge appears in the first passage and is tumbled into the design in the second: all the way through, the piece appears to be on the brink of a much faster tempo, especially when the theme becomes a bristle of arpeggios in the third chorus. But this is a ballad, and Monk's treatment, even with its knockabout interpolations, has an iron control.

This set might, then, offer the tempting conclusion that Monk's world is another of those solitary domains that jazz is full of (his finest modern interpreter, Steve Lacy, is another singular soul). As gripping, provocative and amusing as the many band sides are, it's the six sides of solo piano that one returns to for the definitive insights, the most taxing adventures. His accompaniments can be wily and they are invariably shrewd, but he is more likely to lay out altogether when somebody else is soloing. On an occasion like the date with Gerry Mulligan, the "blowing session" qualities become strange. Mulligan noses cheerfully—and it should be said, very capably—through all the contours of "Straight No Chaser", "Rhythm-A-Ning" and "I Mean You", but once he strides into a solo all the atmosphere of Monk's writing disappears. It becomes just one more of Mulligan's blowing dates. They partner each other closely through "Round Midnight" but this is a carefully played and almost desultory version.

Monk's kinship with his bands is Machiavellian: it's a little like Lennie Tristano, honing his acolytes into brilliant pupils while insulating something of himself from the heat of the music. The somewhat notorious sessions that made up the *Brilliant Corners* and *Monk's Music* albums depict their slightly chaotic nature from Monk's demure way of leading his players just so far and then letting them stand alone (or fall on their backsides).

"Brilliant Corners" itself is a famous instance. The quintet of Monk, Ernie Henry, Sonny Rollins, Oscar Pettiford and Max Roach find it impossible to even play the tune correctly on the date, and

the existing master is spliced together from several different takes. Listening to it is still a weird experience. The band skulks through the theme, where the descending bass motif sounds like a fugitive line from a horror movie soundtrack, and it all becomes faintly comic when played at the double-time which every other chorus is set in! Rollins nips through his solo, though he sounds like someone with a good phrasebook rather than an expert linguist. Ernie Henry, who was nearly wrecked by the music, honks bleakly through a solo where Monk himself is noticeably absent. Only the composer, of course, sounds at home, with a contribution that's as quirky as the theme itself. Keepnews notes that they began the piece at least 25 times and eventually gave up on succeeding in completing a perfect take.

The *Monk's Music* session, with Ray Copeland, Gigi Gryce, Hawkins and Coltrane, Wilbur Ware and Art Blakey, is the best of Monk's Riverside group dates. It's an occasion distinguished by the sonorous qualities of the horns: Gigi Gryce's lovely mellow alto, the forthright brassiness of Ray Copeland's trumpet, the complementary tenors of Trane and Hawk. And still there's a stiff, static sense of group form, with very little interplay between Monk's tunes and the players. There's so little "interpretation" here that the open-ended "Epistrophe" and "Well You Needn't" become amorphous. Only the time remains Monkian: Hawkins, for one, gets it wrong a couple of times in "Epistrophe". The tighter "Off Minor" is more like a Monk group performance, yet there's little enough of the 'composer's ensemble' feeling that one gets with Morton, Ellington, Russell or Evans. It's six men playing at Monk. The most individual touch of the session might be Monk's harmonisation of "Abide With Me", a beautiful slice of unalloyed sentiment that for once seems innocent of any irony (one irritation: the track turns up in the middle of a side here, whereas it begins the original album like an opening prayer).

IT'S WRONG TO surmise, though, that Monk dictates the timbre and emotion of all this music. He makes his own peculiar space in every selection, but a few of the other 34 musicians involved assert themselves with sometimes equal force and candour. Most notably, Johnny Griffin, in the six and a half sides recorded live at New York's Five Spot club, where the tenorman patiently works around each stump of Monk's themes before cannoning off into the changes; and Clark Terry, who actually has Monk as a sideman for one session. Keepnews notes that that date contains "the most relaxed, happiest and funkiest Monk performances I ever witnessed".

Monk's responses to these personalities, men who were sometimes as characterful as himself, seems to give the lie to his isolationism. With Griffin he is consistently sharp and resourceful. In "Blue Monk", after Griffin's hurricane of blues lines, he delivers his own kind of 'fast' solo, where some of his favourite phrases are thrown bluntly into an otherwise gaunt structure. The yearning fantasy of "Let's Cool One" is split open in two incredibly audacious choruses, a riposte to a Griffin solo that bursts through a Rollins-like solo cadenza. Every piece brings its own special contribution, and the sensation here is of a generosity, which blossoms out into something like opulence with the perpetually good-natured Terry. A blues like "Pea Eye" is rollicking but even-handed, different to the disjointed humours of Monk's own kind of wit.

But the pianist seldom recorded with such outside personalities. His meetings with Parker, Gillespie and other immediate contemporaries were not committed to studio discs. His collaborations with Coltrane and Rollins were made when those masters were still at the apprentice stage. His quartet with Charlie Rouse, John Ore and Frankie Dunlop, responsible for the final six sides here, offered him a setting where he could tinker with his art rather than challenge it. Just as some of the boppers felt foul of trying to orchestrate their music, Monk had mixed results at

the Town Hall concert enshrined in three of these sides, where a number of the pianist's themes were performed by a large group under the direction of Monk and Hall Overton. There's something lugubrious about the ten-piece band's negotiation of "Monk's Mood", especially after the grand authority of Monk's opening piano solo, and the rich harmonisations of the *Monk's Music* date fail to be imposed on what might have been a revelatory occasion.

These are, of course, records from only one period of Monk's work, a seven-year stretch. Next to his Blue Note sides, the Riverside years seem sprawling and unkempt. The crisp purpose of his 40s and 50s work isn't dissipated but opened out, scattered over a more expansive studio allowance. The exacting tracks with Milt Jackson, "Criss Cross" and "I Mean You", have no counterpart anywhere in the Riverside dates. And the slow itch of his work for Columbia in the 60s is only prophesied by the final sides here. The box has a couple of albums' worth of new discoveries; among them, two takes of "Crepuscle With Nellie" by the *Monk's Music* band, each with its solemn piano reading by Monk which he always gave to this tune; a couple of longish Five Spot/Griffin tracks; and a session with Shelly Manne on drums by what was otherwise the band that made *Thelonious Monk At The Blackhawk*. The latter is an interesting failure: where Art Blakey or Philly Joe could almost read Monk's mind, ingeniously supportive, Manne's beatific swing is parentally wrong for the pianist's jolting themes.

THIS SORT OF documentary action is one merit of a set like this: what *The Complete Riverside Recordings* may illuminate above all is how difficult it is to try and pin down and make sense of such a music with microphones and tape. Orrin Keepnews's notes on the 30 different sessions are a catalogue of exasperations, not always triumphed over by the music. Playing through side after side presses on the listener the sense of unreal, empty time that holds sway in the vacuum of the

studio. No wonder the live tracks with Griffin and the quartet seem brash and relieved by comparison.

Some of those frustrations are both distilled and exonerated by the magnificent solo music. The pianist's choices are a mixture of decent standards like "Everything Happens To Me", preposterous obscurities like "There's Danger In Your Eyes Cherie" and a picked handful of Monk originals. Without the prevailing force of a rhythm section, Monk is free to deliver himself in slow motion, as he does in the incredible reading of "I Should Care", which is chiselled ever closer to the bone over three takes. Or harry the tempo, or quickly alter the harmonies. Or anything. A favourite observation on Monk is how he chose to derive all his materials from jazz alone, the stride devices, the personalised quotes, the many products of a New York musician's lifetime at the keyboard. But an element in Monk looks back even further, perhaps to the formal precisions of ragtime. As a composer, Monk's mettle was always judged to the absolute. His leadership called for the greatest accuracy from confederates. The band that couldn't quite cope with "Brilliant Corners" might never have got it right. Monk spent the rest of his playing life mostly toying with his tunes, writing only a handful of new titles in his later years. Those Blue Note printings of "Off Minor", "Well You Needn't" and "In Walked Bud" were never really surpassed.

Though there is some danger of it now being more closely associated with Dexter Gordon, "Round Midnight" is the one Monk that everyone will know. There are seven takes of his 1957 solo version here: as it progresses there are new refinements, but the changes from first to last are small, wrong turnings aside. It's as though Monk knew the piece, exactly, as soon as he'd written it; thereafter, it could only be played again. That might be the reason why this great jazz composer has puzzled everyone who's tried to play him. The point had already been made.

(*The Complete Riverside Recordings* is available as a 22-album set on VJ-5102-23.)



KRONOS

A stone in the throat

WORDS: BRIAN MORTON

PHOTOS: LIAM WOON

THE STRING QUARTET AS SEX MACHINE.

FIRST THERE WAS

F

Chaos. Then there was the Earth, the Underworld and Love. Then Gaia, the earth-mother, lay with her son Ouranos, the sky, and produced the race of Titans. The youngest and cleverest of these was Kronos.

At his mother's behest, he rose up against Ouranos, castrating him with a jagged sickle. To retain his new-won power, Kronos began to devour his own children, consuming all but Zeus who outwitted his father, choked him with a stone, and ruled for ever.

Given so bleak a scenario it seems fair to ask. Why Krouss Quartet? As the group's founder, isn't first violin David

Harrington also rather in the position of the founding father Ouranos? He meets the question in an attitude roughly reminiscent of a full-back facing a direct free kick and recommends a recent *Rolling Stone* which contains "the best explanation of the name I've yet to see".

What the piece (by Neil Tesser) actually contains, far from an "explanation", is just another rerun of the myth, with some gaps. The exact why remains unstated beyond Harrington's admission, "There's so many different meanings . . .", at which cellist Joan Jeanrenaud butts in, ". . . and we mean all of them".

It's very tempting to point out that the Judaic version of the same myth, the story of Noah, Ham and Canaan, places a curse on the fourth child; bad news for a quartet? But then this isn't a seminar on Hesiod or *The Golden Bough*. Curses, or possible curses, need to wait till slightly later in the story.

The present line-up of the Kronos Quartet (or Kronos, *just quart*, as they seem to prefer) has been in place since late 1977. Harrington had been running a quartet for four years and had been joined by Hank Dutt, the present violist. Out of the blue, they found themselves two short, minus the second fiddler and the cellist. Given the geographical parameters of what followed, the present Kronos is the happy product either of serendipity or fate.

Jeanrenaud understates, "We're all from different parts of the United States." Vowel sounds as tich as the mid-range on her cello give away her Memphis origins. Her route to Kronos was via Geneva, when a phone call from Hank Dutt attracted her back for audition.

"I knew Hank before but I'm the only one with that kind of connection. We were both at the Indiana University School of Music. John [Sherba, the second violin] was in Milwaukee."

Harrington, meanwhile, was learning his music "on the streets of Seattle", where the group was originally formed.

THIS KRONOS WIELDED the sickle at a point just above Bartok, a

notoriously sensitive spot on the corpus of modern music. They've done Schoenberg and the second Viennese School but increasingly they concentrate on new works, most of them new commissions direct from the composer. Never shy about making odious comparisons, I mention the fact that the Arditti String Quartet, equally known for its advocacy of a contemporary repertoire, had recently gone back to Haydn, just to see how it sounded and felt.

"We're more interested in going forward," Jeanrenaud says, and these days the group's contact with the work really is point-of-production, manuscript stuff.

"The idea of working with composers, actually bringing them in on rehearsals, that began at a very early age with me," says Harrington. "The first premiere I was ever involved with was Ken Benshoon's Piano Quintet, when I was 16."

Unknown over here, next to unknown back home, Benshoon was Harrington's teacher and remains a potent influence. Working directly with a composer allows a greater interplay between the original formal conception and the individual personalities and capabilities of the players. It has the effect of making the group ever more tightly knit.

There's none of that sense — admittedly fostered by the lead-and-three-followers manner of the classical quartet — of four musical lines as straight and unconvoluted as the four strings on a fiddle. Harrington is insistent. "We're not the Kronos String Quartet. We're the Kronos Quartet. We're closer to a band or a jazz ensemble."

I quote them the story of meeting the Amadeus String Quartet on their 35th anniversary as a performing group and watching the others' amazement at cellist Martin Lovett's passionate conviction (which they claimed never to have heard before) that Bartok was as great a composer as Beethoven; they were equally gobsmacked by first violin Norbert Brainin's long-nursed desire to transcribe *The Art of The Fugue* for string quartet. How do you work together for three and a half decades and not hear these things? After nearly a

decade of hotel rooms and long-haul jets, do the Kronos feel they've begun to live in each other's pockets?

"We do seem to be much closer than other groups I hear about," Jeanrenaud says, and Harrington echoes the point. "We know each other's families. We have dinner together after concerts. We get along. But we're still four very individual personalities. It's difficult because of the schedule, but life's difficult. There's no question that in the last nine years, in all our associations with composers, lighting designers, clothes designers, set designers, we've created a body of work that is unimaginable without the four individuals."

"If" — this in response to the point that the Amadeus were once threatened with break-up or replacement by Sigmund Nissel's brain tumour — "that were to change, the group would definitely not be the same. We'll certainly in future add to the group for certain projects, as we've done already, but we're not likely to subtract, to go work on solo projects." (Fortunately for the transcription they do countenance ad hoc splits for interviews; on the day we meet, as you'll have gathered, it's a duo; Dutt and Sherba are elsewhere, catching up on other commitments.)

The schedule is pretty ferocious.

"We do about 120 concerts a year. We're going to Asia for the first time in October. We work all over Europe and the United States and we play so frequently now that we find ourselves rehearsing in hotel rooms or backstage before the concert."

We talk about English composer Brian Ferneyhough's recent complaint that new music suffers from the relentless pursuit of novelty. In the past, promoters would insist on rock-solid programmes with grudging room for a premiere at the beginning, just as the audience took their seats, waved to friends and coughed. The argument was that they wouldn't be able to tell it from the tuning-up anyway. These days, as Harrington admits, they'll specifically ask the Kronos for their wildest repertoire. Ferneyhough saw those

vital, assimilating second performances disappearing under the next wave of premieres (the Ardittis have obliged with over 50 performances of his demanding Second Quartet); isn't this a problem for a group like Kronos, so relentlessly committed to the new, that their listeners will never become sufficiently familiar with any one piece?

Harrington is quick to draw on this and the figures are pretty staggering.

"Each year we've had an active working repertoire of 60 or 65 quartets. The Terry Riley which you heard last night" — at the Wigmore Hall, London — "was completed for us in September; we've played it maybe 30 times. The Alfred Schnittke, we gave the American premiere a few weeks ago; that was maybe the fifth performance. The working repertoire is real large but, not being in London that often, we like to play the latest and greatest. We've probably played 'Purple Haze' 200 times!"

AH, YES, "Purple Haze". The two things everyone knows about Kronos are that they dress wild and do Hendrix in the encores. It's certainly the best sign that they've broken the classical music mould more effectively than our Gang of Four has managed to do (or do yet; this is written pre-election) in electoral politics. "Purple Haze", however, isn't their only foray into "non-serious" music. They've played James Brown's "Sex Machine" (accompanied by a huge robot called Elvik); they've done a Hendrix "Star Spangled Banner" out on the diamond at a baseball game; and they've done a medley of TV themes, "I Love Lucy" and all. It's kind of hard to imagine the lounge-suited Ardittis seguing from the "East Enders" theme into "Howard's Way", but when your players are in Spandex space suits with high boots and highlight hairdos, your expectations have already taken a jolt.

Perhaps the Kronos' most important work to date musically has been their involvement with jazz and specifically with Bill Evans and Thelonious Monk, both of whom have been explored on brilliant posthumous recordings. Ever

anxious to refute any suggestion that Kronos began only yesterday when the papers caught up, Harrington explains.

"The first piece that was ever written for us — Ken Benshoon's *Travelling Music* — had elements of both jazz and American folk music. There's no question, though that meeting Orrin Keepnews [Bill Evans's producer and anagrammatic inspiration for "Re: Person I Knew"] was a very important moment for us. I was interested in Monk from when I was 16 but the idea of actually recording a body of Monk's music, that didn't come up till Orrin and I met."

The Monk and Evans albums were good examples of the addition principle, with Ron Carter and Jim Hall guesting. They also prompt regrets that the quartet never had the chance to work with Monk and Evans directly, for they've recently inspired other jazz musicians, some with long-standing "classical" ambitions, to take on commissions. They're working with Max Roach, and Cecil Taylor's writing a piece. Ornette is doing something for quartet plus oboe, apparently phenomenally difficult and there's a talk of a piece by that famous jazz M. the Sling, without whom no story etc. . . .

They're playing as many jazz festivals these days as recital rooms and problems of scale intrude. Is there any attraction in the new RAAD amplified fiddles?

"We did experiment with them for about a month," says Jeanrenaud, "but at that point we just weren't prepared to become a quintet" by adding a permanent sound man like the Philip Glass Ensemble's Kurt Munkacs. Harrington sees a lot of mileage left in the traditional instruments; you need them louder, you make them up.

"In an age of increasing impersonalisation, the quartet still sounds personal, like voices. People are beginning to realise that these really old instruments, horsehair and wood and wire, are still able, through alchemy, or witchcraft or something, to produce something remarkable. When you're involved in the inner world of somebody of the magnitude of Schnittke or Riley, to allow that substance and

depth to be controlled from outside the group isn't right."

INSIDE, OUTSIDE. Beyond the highly successful populism, the exotic clothes and the dramatic stage presence, there is still a hint of hermeticism, a sense that "Kronos music" (Harrington's term for what they play) is something apart, a series of momentary allegiances but also something pristine. Kronos belongs to more than one identifiable North American tradition. It exhibits what some called the frontier spirit, what Woody Allen likes to call the shark principle, the urgent need to move forward, and at speed, or die. As performers, they're reminiscent of Glenn Gould or Leonard Bernstein, who both occupy more of the musical foreground than the composer they are interpreting. As participants in the process of composition, as highly visible performers, are they actually drawing attention away from the tensions we normally listen for? And what of those swoops up and down market? Will "Kronos music" come to seem like "Bernstein", instantly recognisable only as a superficial, ultimately impenetrable, inward-looking, masonic?

In the meantime, on their rare home days, they sit in a San Francisco office, working patiently through a proliferating heap of quartet scores, sent in from all over. They offer *carte blanche* on that title, so here goes. There's a 1960 novel by Conrad Richter called *The Waters of Kronos*. A man dying of some cosmetically unspecified complaint makes a nostalgic pilgrimage back to his mid-West home town, after a life of unreflective success. He returns to find the place on the brink, literally, of submersion in a new dam. • Hallucinating gently, the man drowns in his own past and the town's future.

The Kronos Quartet have consciously ruled out the musical past; do they risk drowning in its future? The demand for novelty is a great weight damming up behind them; those new scores are beginning to lap round their feet.

A Platform For Success

WORDS: KENNY MATHIESON

ILLUSTRATION: PHIL BICKER

THE NEW STRENGTH OF JAZZ NORTH OF THE BORDER.

SCOTTISH JAZZ? Why, sure, we've got lots of that up here, haven't we? We've got Dixieland and Trad, we've got bop and beyond, we've even got a player or two coming from outside the mainstream styles, right?

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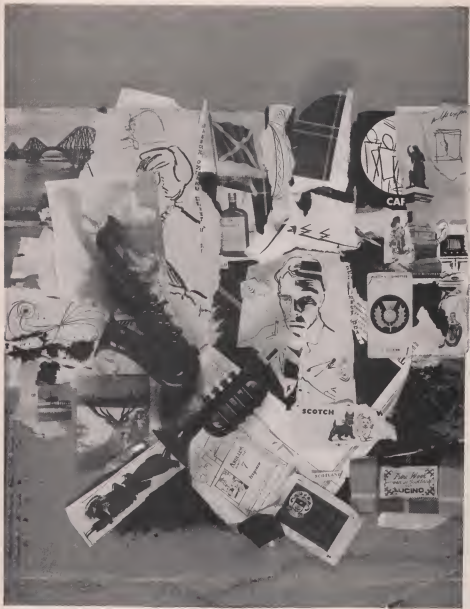
Well, yes, we have, and the strength of the local scene is a justifiable source of pride to all concerned – and that goes back a long way, too. Take a look at the names on the sleeve of Benny Carter's 1936 album *Swinging In Maida Vale* (Jasmine), and half the guys on there are Scottish, most of them from Glasgow, a city which used to figure prominently on the international touring circuit, playing host to the likes of Basie and Ellington, Coltrane and Miles.

The way in which jazz fell away in Glasgow has been one of the unsolved mysteries of our times. Restrictive licensing laws,

dodgy venues, and a surfeit of free jazz in pubs have all conspired to whittle away Glasgow's support for the music, a situation which everyone hopes will change in the wake of this year's inaugural Glasgow Jazz Festival, opening on June 26 with Burton/Corea and The MJQ, and going on to feature such big-drawing (so we all pray) stars as Dizzy Gillespie, Sarah Vaughan, and the aforesaid Benny Carter.

IF IT DOES succeed, it will hearten no one more than Platform's Roger Spence, with the exception of Ken (no relation – he's the one who plays drums) Mathieson, the Festival's administrator. Roger Spence has been instrumental in bringing major stars to Scotland for over a decade now, but admits that the Glasgow problem has never been solved: anyone he books will do much better in Edinburgh, while almost every Glasgow promotion loses money. Up until now, Platform have worked through a series of regional Societies, but a recent re-organisation has pulled all responsibility for their promotions under a single roof in Edinburgh, as Roger explains.

"The re-organisation is to enable the company to be financially



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viable, which is the most important fact for Platform. There has to be an organisation like this in Scotland, or the possibilities for development would be very limited indeed. We must show the powers that be that jazz can generate the kind of public support which will justify our subsidies, at a time when public funding of the arts is severely constricted. Without them, we wouldn't exist, and we have to respond to that need by becoming a more professional organisation."

Platform's most successful sphere of activity has been in Edinburgh, where their promotions at the Queen's Hall, a former church turned concert hall, regularly serve up major international artists – the current season alone includes Wayne Shorter, the Gil Evans Orchestra, the Kenny Burrell Trio and the Gary Burton Quartet, and they have been rewarded with very healthy attendances thus far. Roger also plans to continue a policy of finding slots in the programme for Scottish musicians; the same season included the *Wire* concert featuring Jeff Freedner, Chick Lyall and Sandro Ciancio, while another will showcase pianist David Newton, singer Sophie Bancroft, and the Guy Butguez Quartet.

"There will be less last-minute booking and publicity, and we will be able to introduce more co-ordinated planning, which would even allow us to bring in players purely for Scottish dates. I would also hope that it would let us provide more tours for Scottish-based musicians – it is crucial that we offer more work opportunities than in the past, if the music is to develop up here. We have players now who are making a mark in the international arena, guys like Tommy Smith and Martin Taylor, and we need to encourage that development.

"The problem with touring Scottish groups in England is that the market place there is so heavily subsidised. If a Scottish musician comes into that market place, they simply cannot make the kind of money which makes a tour viable. The only reason, for example, that Tommy has been able to tour Forward Motion is that he makes his living from Gary Burton's band, and can afford to tour at a loss just to get out and play."

The kind of musicians most likely to benefit immediately from increased exposure of this kind would be those players who have established their place at the head of the Scottish jazz rankings: saxophonists Bobby Wishart, whose group includes drummer Sandro Ciancio and pianist Eddie Richmond; and Gordon Cruickshank, with David Newton and the bass/drum duo of the fast-improving Brian Shields and Dave Travis; Gordon's regular sparring partner, trombonist and arranger Brian Keddie, who succeeds in being continually innovative on that perverse instru-

ment; drummer Bill Kyle, re-domiciled in Edinburgh after a long stint in London; and guitarist Martin Taylor.

These are the most musically adventurous of our established players, although there are a fair number of more traditional performers who enjoy a massive local (in some cases not so local) following: singers Carol Kidd and Fiona Duncan, Dixieland bands like Mike Hart's in Edinburgh and George Penman's in Glasgow, big bands led by George McGowan, Bill Fanning and Tommy Sampson, the idiosyncratic vibes and saxophone player Jimmy Feighan from Glasgow, pianist Alex Shaw and bass player Ronnie Rae in Edinburgh, or trumpeter Jimmy Deuchar (well-known on the London scene for his work with Hayes and Scott, and more recently the Charlie Watts Big Band) from Dundee.

The real beneficiaries, however, are likely to be the younger musicians now emerging in numbers again, after a long gap between the Cruickshank/Keddie/Kyle generation in the late 1960s, and Tommy Smith, the Rae brothers, and the current 1980s crop.

"It is important that we recognise the musicians who have reached maturity, and who have a working group or a proposition that is attractive to the public. I see the future, though, very much in terms of the younger musicians who are coming through. I feel it is very important that we get behind the young musicians, and look to build up a pool of maybe 15 or 20 players, and do all we can to help them become genuinely professional musicians here.

"Guys like Bobby Wishart have achieved professional standards here, but they have never been able to be exclusively full-time musicians, and I would love to think that we could create the conditions where that became possible. The major problem is that we can't really offer these guys enough work to enable them not to have to work in bars where there is no admission and no proper payments.

"That is very much a British problem – I don't know anywhere else with so much free jazz as this country, and the more there is going on for nothing, the harder it is for promoters to build up a viable market for these players. But they have to keep working, so they don't have any choice but take these poor guys. We have to start changing the situation.

"I think the Glasgow Jazz Festival will help focus attention on the music again, not only in Glasgow. For me, this is the single most ambitious festival actually put together in this country, rather than just bought off-the-peg from George Wein's touring packages, like the Middlesbrough event in the late 1970s, or the Capital Radio Festival in London. Bracknell is still the most musically adventurous, but in terms of scale, Glasgow is breaking new

ground. We have to hope that events like this, and our own promotions, will all help to raise the profile of jazz in this country."

WITH AN INCREASINGLY innovative Festival in Dundee, and Platform's own Round Midnight event running in tandem with the steadily diversifying McEwans Festival in Edinburgh in August, Scottish jazz will be firmly in the public eye this summer, although the scene outside these cities is sparse, with only Aberdeen, Inverness and Ayr (Martin Taylor's hometown) providing much in the way of a regular jazz scene. Whether we really can sustain the kind of situation Roger Spence envisages remains to be seen, but there is no doubt that we are once again producing the basic material for all this, the young players themselves.

Any list of the best and brightest would add names like pianist Brian Kellock and ex-Buddy Rich baritone saxophonist Jay Craig in Edinburgh, Kevin Murray's Celtic Jazz from Dundee, and saxophonist Tony Gorman in Glasgow, to those already mentioned above, while the new Glasgow Youth Jazz Orchestra, in the more than capable hands of Bobby Wishart, will surely unearth even more, with 19-year-old guitarist Kevin Mackenzie already attracting notice.

Which brings us back to that opening interrogative statement. Scottish jazz? Well, yes, but the fact remains that our best players have achieved very high standards indeed in playing other people's music, even when they have written it themselves. Jazz in Scotland has remained essentially derivative of mainstream American styles, from Dixieland to bop, often given unexpected twists in the hands of players like Wishart and Tommy Smith. Nothing wrong in that, of course, but if we really want to start talking about Scottish jazz, then we need to start encouraging the new musicians to look elsewhere for their inspiration.

Scotland should be potentially capable, given the kind of broadening of opportunities envisaged by Roger Spence, of producing music comparable with the kind of developments we have heard in the Scandinavian countries, where equally limited resources have not prevented a distinctive jazz voice from emerging. Jazz in Scotland is alive and kicking, and that is great; keeping the faith is what guys like Wishart and Cruickshank are all about. But maybe the time has come to look even further: the programme for the next decade should perhaps be the birth of a genuinely innovative jazz style, running in tandem with the more established forms.

Then we could really talk about *Scottish Jazz*.

S O U N D C H E C K

LEE KONITZ QUARTET

IDEAL SCENE

(Soul Note SN 11159)

Recorded: Milan, 22-23 July 1986.

Chick Corea Arranged; Tadel Bruns, Sally Sancho, Ezzi-Theris; If You Could See Me Now; Stern-Cass, Stella By Starlight.

Konitz (as); Harold Danko (p), Rufus Reid (b), Al Harewood (d).

I HEARD TWO of three sets by this band at last year's North Sea Festival, and it was apparent that Lee Konitz – a nomadic figure as far as playing live is concerned – was working in an unusually secure, convivial setting. His sleeve note here mentions the faith he has in each member of "what really felt like a band". They recorded *Ideal Scene* a couple of weeks after those European gigs, and everything here is hot and perking. In the parlous realm of

making jazz records, this course must be one of the best.

Konitz is as durable as the summertime. There are few among his surviving contemporaries who've taken up as many challenges as he. It was a surprise to see him among Derek Bailey's Company, but not a shock. Among his many records there are always moments when he seems about to wriggle free of every constraint and operate in clear, open space, and even in such a closely-argued date as this he retains a solid independence of line.

That said, this is still a tight, democratic quartet, where the rhythm section wants to work at Konitz's own level. Danko is a thoughtful and full-bodied player, a two-handed player, whose three compositions here are mature developments of a post-bop



Lee Konitz and shirt

CAROLINE FORBES

vocabulary. He enjoys big, rippling chords, and his solos grow naturally out of his conception of the whole piece: listen to the complex interplay of his hands on "Silly Samba", a very fast and exciting track. Rufus Reid is a large, almost vocal presence on bass; Al Harewood has a strong touch, his brushes skittering, his cymbals a quickfire shifting of accents. The themes on the first side all run together, with a drum passage linking each of them, and the impression of a single driving unit is irresistible.

For once I have to quarrel with Signor Bonandri's production. Konitz himself is sometimes a little too backward in the mix, and his presence isn't as physically palpable as it might be. He doesn't often play with such a punchy group as this. Yet his insights and swift thinking are unimpaired. He takes a beautiful solo on Todd Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now", buffing his tone to bring out the yearning edge on the melody. "Stella By Starlight" is given an oblique reading: Lee's alto reveals portions of the melody, a little at a time, Al Harewood suggests rather than states rhythms, and a many-pieced jigsaw of "Stella" is slowly put together. After the motoring band of the first side, this is the other face of the group.

Perhaps only "Ezz-Thetic" is delivered a little too quickly and sparkily to suit George Russell's composition. Otherwise, *Ideal Scene* is a model of intellect and lucidity and fire, with Lee Konitz at his engaging best.

Richard Cook

BLURT

SMOKE TIME

(Toeblock TRLP 4 00307 J)

Recorded: no details

Saxophone: Night Before, Bullet Proof Vest, Abuse Too Fast; Through By You, Congregate, The Body That They Built To Fit The Car, School of Friends, The Tree Is Dead, Long Live The Tree.

Ted Milton (as, v); Steve Eagles (g), Paul Wiggins (d, vin).

BLURT COME ON somewhere in the vicinity of Xero Slingsby and drift on in the direction of Zom, Moss and Co, with occasional nods at pre-back-to-e'n't Blood Ulmer on the way.

The ingredients are very sparse indeed, strawless riffs and vocals keyed together as only a good brickie could to provide a solid wall of sound. Milton actually vocals more than he saxes, which is probably good news for Selmer (or Woodworths, judging by the plucky effort someones blowing on the cover); brief, rasping

breaks fit perfectly into the snarled words, usually not a lot more than the title *ad ref*.

Wiggins' violin gives the last track a hint of Ulmer's *Ulysses* and raises the whole enterprise a notch. Over the longer stretch, though—seven minutes-plus in the case of "The Tree Is Dead"—the formula begins to lose potency. Like Xero, Blurt are more effective at Ramones pace. Almost every track is a minute too long and there aren't enough of them. Howzat for perverse?

All in all, as fresh and startling as the white vinyl it's on. Abuse ton fric, or as we say up in Ecosse, cop yer whack for this yin.

Brian Morton

STEVE LACY

THE KISS

(Lunatic 002)

Recorded: Hiroshima, 24 May 1986.

Monk's Dream, Misterioso, The Cross, Castles, Morning Joy, Blues For Aida, The Kiss. Lacy (ss).

ONLY MONK

(Soul Note SN 1160)

Recorded: Milan, 29–31 July 1985.

Endeavour, Hoopie, Errand, Pannonic, Little Route Taste, Misterioso, Work, Light Blue, Who Knows? Lacy (ss).

STEVE LACY AND MAL WALDRON

LET'S CALL THIS

(hat ART 2038)

Recorded: Paris, 13–15 August 1981.

Epitaphy, Round Midnight, Deep Endwaters, The Base, I Feel A Draft, The Peak, Let's Call This, Well You Needn't, The Scagalls Of Kristiansund. Lacy (ss), Waldron (p).

SEMPRE AMORE

(Soul Note SN 1170)

Recorded: 17 February 1986.

Johnny Come Lately, Prelude To A Kiss, Stars Crossed Lovers, To The Better Azurs, Sempere Amore, A Flower Is A Luxurious Thing, Souad. Lacy (ss), Waldron (p).

FOUR MORE STEVE LACY records. Anyone who buys Lacy's LPs probably gets hooked into collecting them, and so we all end up with shelves full of them. Some jazz players struggle to get on to record, but Lacy seems to have a new one out every month. Maybe we should begin marking them out of ten, to sort out the most necessary purchases.

These four present Steve at his sparsest: two duos with Mal Waldron and two solo discs. They also trace his fascination with Thelonious Monk, for there is Monk's music on each of

them. With Waldron, a pianist who also loves Monk but who takes his minimalism rather differently, Lacy brings out the rhapsodic and funky sides of the composer. On *Let's Call This*, which is more from the sessions that produced the earlier *Herb De L'Ombre Snake Out*, they treat "Well You Needn't" as a kind of intellectual buny-hop (even the audience begins clapping along), while "Round Midnight" telescopes a number of moods into its duration. There are fascinating moments when Lacy drags the tempo with long notes and the pianist ripples by playing the next line with even greater assertion (Mal is always assertive). Two impromptu pieces, "Deep Endeavours" and "The Peak", are so certain as to defy their apparent freedom. Most beautiful of all is Waldron's sombre theme "The Scagalls Of Kristiansund", which creates a very moving climax. Definitely a nine.

These other discs is a collection of Ellington and Strayhorn interpretations. The choice of pieces is musically, with "Prelude To A Kiss" the only pop-Ellington theme among them. This is an austere, even grim look at these tunes: they bring out the darker side of even "Johnny Come Lately", which one tends to remember as something jolly. "Prelude To A Kiss" as positively gloomy, the faster tempo of "To The Better" seems laboured and only "Sempere Amore" seems to suit their fastidious treatment. Six.

In his solo all-Monk investigation, Steve is back on favourite territory. There is a spectral echo, perhaps the resonance of piano strings, here and there. In "Misterioso" it makes the 12-bar blues into an eerie thing—which is what Ramblin' Thomas and Bo Weevil Jackson do, of course. Each theme is opened surgically, each probed for a particular motive. "Light Blue", rare Monk, is rarified by means of a pristine exploration of the chilly high register of the saxophone. "Humph" isn't better but seems to be because the soprano's phrases make a quick play of emphases. "Pannonic", one of Monk's most sophisticated ballad ideas, becomes a small labyrinth where the main motif keeps recurring. Another name, if you don't find solos too threadbare.

The Hiroshima recital on *The Kiss* has a greater vitality and a lesser intimacy. The "Misterioso" here has a marbled quality, and some of the music seems a little harshly struck. But the brusque contours of "Morning Joy" are better served by this approach. "Blues For Aida" is a severe requiem, with the reiterations of line engraving themselves on Lacy's still

space. Another good one, though only available at ferocious import price: eight Four more Steve Lacy records.

Mike Fish

DUKE ELLINGTON ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM

(Affinity AFS 1034)

Recorded: New York City, 1926-31.

Rockin' In Rhythm; Mood Indigo; Double Check Stomp; Aulol Sad; Yellow Dog Blues; Louisiana; Black & Tan Fantasy; Creole Rhapsody; Immigration Blues; East St. Louis Toodle-Do; The Mooche; New Orleans Low Down; Rent Party Blues; Cotton Club Stomp; Home Again Blues; Sweet Mama; Harlem Flat Blues; Jungle Jamboree.
Personnel including Bubba Miley, Cootie Williams (tr), Tricky Sam Nanton (tb), Barney Bigard (cl), Johnny Hodges (as); Harry Carney (bs, cl).

S.R.O.

(Denon 33C 38-7680) (Compact Disc)

Recorded: see below

Take The 'A' Train; I Got It Bad; Things Ain't What They Used to Be; West Indian Parade; Black & Tan Fantasy; Creole Love Call; The Mooche; Soul Call; El Gato; Open House, Rockin' In Rhythm; Jam With Son; Adlib On Nippon; C-Jazz Blues; The Hawk Talks.
Personnel: see below.

THE FIRST ALBUM's selection of early Ellington opens each side with a couple of hits, and then rambles chronologically through the late 1920s. This obscures the development of Duke's writing, but doesn't detract from virtuoso conceptions such as "Cotton Club Stomp" or the title track.

During this period, the band's solo capability was immeasurably strengthened by the arrival of key performers such as Hodges and Williams. They were well played-in by the latest of these pieces, the 2-part "Creole Rhapsody" (this version, which used to be admired more than the very different re-write on RCA NL 89762, hasn't been reissued for ages). On this and the other acknowledged highspots, Ellington was already using his soloists and their individual sounds as elements of composition, while the lesser items are often validated by their contributions.

Cootie, Hodges and Carney were all in place for the two (?) live sets on the Denon CD, as well as early repertoire such as "Rockin'" and the medley of "Black And Tan", "Love Call" and "Mooche". The important and infrequently recorded "Adlib On Nippon" lasts 12 minutes and outweighs some shorter, more casual items, but many of these are hard to assess since the microphone sounds as if it's attached to the drumkit. The attempted

personnel listings are a joke, especially as the compilers seem unaware that "C Jam" has a brief guest appearance (Paris, 1969??) by the unexpected but unmistakable Archie Shepp.

The annotator of the booklet does, however, twice use the caveat, "The piece is cut off midway for some reason". Thanks for the warning.

Brian Priestley

KENNY BURRELL GENERATION

(Blue Note BT-85137)

Recorded: New York, 24 & 25 October 1986

Generation; High Fly; Jumpin' The Blues; Lover Man; Mark I; So Little Time; Fungi Menu.
Kenny Burrell, Rodney Jones, Bobby Brown (g); Dave Jackson (b); Kenny Washington (d).

STANLEY TURRENTINE WONDERLAND

(Blue Note BT-85140)

Recorded: California, no date.

Bird Of Beauty; Creptie; You And I; Loving For The City; Boogie On Reggae Woman; Rockin' Late; Don't You Worry Bout A Thing; Sir Duke.
Stanley Turrentine (ts); Mike Muller (g); Don Grusin, Ronnet Foster, Eddie Del Barro (p, ky), Abe Labonte (b); Harvey Mason (dr); Paulinho Da Costa (perc); Stevie Wonder (hca) (collective personnel).

HERE ARE TWO VETERANS of the Blue Note label, both of whom were featured when Al Lion and Frank Wolff were putting out albums which lent at least some justification to the claim to offer "The Finest In Jazz Since 1939" (which in those days appeared - only - on the logo). The quality of the music on these albums, and they're not alone on Blue Notes of recent origin, raises some doubts about the

current validity of the statement.

Kenny Burrell's early records marked him out as a very capable but essentially conventional performer; a nice mellow sound, lots of technique, and in the 1950s and 60s his notes and chords often provided a welcome contrast to the more hectic moments of many an otherwise standard blowing session album. Essentially he hasn't changed: his music remains recognisably what it was then, but the context within which it is set has altered. More and more he has opted for a quietly reflective environment where subtlety is matched with subtlety, where "traditional" instrumental skills are valued, where technique is refined and pure craftsmanship is honoured.

"Generation" presents Burrell's "Guitar Band", captured during a gig at the Village Vanguard, and represents some sort of ultimate in underdemonstrativeness. The two younger guitarists appearing with him don't quite have Burrell's instrumental command but they do work along similar lines. Add to this a neat but very discreet bass and drums and the net result is that you have to play the album very loud to retain much chance of staying awake till the end. It has to be said that if you do this certain modest changes of pace and mood can be discerned. I have no doubt that those who aspire to play guitar within this idiom will find it fascinating and an object-lesson in what and what not to do, but they could learn as much and more from earlier discs when Burrell looked out on the world as well as in upon himself.

Turrentine is another long-time Blue Note musician, who never really fulfilled the potential he promised when he emerged alongside brother Tommy in Max Roach's band in 1960. Faced with the problem of





making a living I suppose an album of Stevie Wonder songs is something that seemed like a good crossover marketing idea at the time, resulting in his huffing and puffing politely through the themes, throwing in a few minimal variations. There's nothing here that remotely approaches the deliberate and systematic distortions to which Rollins has subjected "Isn't She Lovely" from time to time (the recorded version — on *Easy Living*, Milestone 9080 — gives only a modest approximation of what happened on some of these occasions). The result of Turrentine's respectful approach and Ronnie Foster's shiny but shallow arrangements and production is merely a reminder that without the words — which can often reflect a wealth of populist cultural detail — and without the vocal delivery the tunes themselves are sometimes pretty but also sometimes pretty boring, and only work when they are part of a very different whole.

Jack Cooke

ERROLL GARNER THE COMPLETE SAVOY SESSIONS VOLUME 3

(Savoy WL 70833)

Recorded: Los Angeles and New York, June and August 1949.

This Can't Be Love, The Man I Love, Moon Glow, I Want A Little Girl, She's Funny That Way, Until The Real Thing Comes Along, Confessin', Stormy Weather, On The Savoy Side Of The Street, Realize, Everything Happens To Me, Sincerely To The Stars

Garner (p); John Simmons (b); Alvin Stoller (d); Leonard Gaskin (b); Charlie Smith (d) (collective personnel).

THIS IS THE final and probably the best of the Savoy Garner reissues. Errol Garner was a superb improvising musician and pianist who

had a wonderful flair for transforming banal and quite un-promising Tin Pan Alley material into enduring jazz. Unfortunately he also had another side — as one of the progenitors, and on occasion practitioners, of cocktail piano, the light and pernicious style central to much modern popular music. It is Garner's ballad performances which more often display the latter side, and on the Savoy material such numbers are usually subject to florid over-treatment with the ubiquitous spread chords.

Ballads predominated on Vol 2, but there are fewer here and some, eg "Stormy Weather", do have a tasteful and beautifully melodic treatment. But it is for the medium/up-tempo performances that this album is mainly worth acquiring. Garner began as a swing pianist and a joyful swinging feel continued to be a hallmark of his playing despite the accretion of a bop style. Numbers such as "Sunny Side" and "Confessin'" display a wonderful zest — with lucid melodic invention, crisp articulation and the characteristic deliciously-behind-the-beat right hand. This album could be just what the doctor ordered!

Andy Hamilton

THE LOUNGE LIZARDS NO PAIN FOR CAKES

(Antilles AN 8714)

Recorded: November, 1986.

My Trip To Ireland, No Pain For Cakes, My Clown's On Fire, Carry Me Out, Bob & Nae, Tango No. 3, Determation — For Rosa Parks, The Magic Of Palermo, Can't Be Passion, Where Were You?
Curtis Fowlkes (b); John Lurie (s); Anders Gardsmand (b); Roy Nathanson (reeds); Evan Lurie (p); Marc Ribot (g, banjo, also c); Jill Jaffe (v); Eric Sanko (b); E. J. Rodriguez (perc); Dougie Bowne (d).

LURIE OPENS *No Pain For Cakes* with an Afro-Beat song called "My Trip To Ireland": does it work? The Lounge Lizard deadpan is so pervasive that it hardly makes sense to ask that kind of question. They play the line between deadly parody and deadly seriousness so close that they seem to have moved into something else altogether.

Stock-confrontation coupled with underlying artistic seriousness is pretty well a No Wave cliché these days, of course. The Luries want us still a bit appalled (remember when they proclaimed their art was "Fake Jazz"?), and they want us to check them as Real Jazz Composers. With one parent Ellington and the other Harry Patch. Or something.

Maybe the place to start is John Lurie's playing. Imagine Sidney Bechet coming back from heaven to express — on horn only — the idea that actually it's like something in a Kathy Acker novel. The theme to "No Pain For Cakes" itself reminds most exactly of the Sicilian Waltz that opened the documentary serial *Crime, Inc.*: a folk dance gone bitterly cold, wintry in the naked understanding of evil.

This witchery of coldness, and the glamour of addition to it, they'll always be the Lizards' natural mode of address. They don't really have much of a sense of humour. The cover painting, *Uncle Wiggley As The Devil*, argues for some fearsome congruence between a famous US cartoon rabbit and the horned one himself, but I think we're meant to fall back, *Hey! Right!*, instead of chuckling. Remember that Lurie J.'s *Resurrection Of Albert Ayler* seemed almost uniquely constructed to exorcise all trace of AA's pentecostal ghost-fury in favour of purely formal representation, which is a weird undertaking. And the ripeness of *Stranger Than Paradise*'s soundtrack was a magnificent limping sensuality of nothingness.

No Pain For Cakes takes it too much for granted that we're going to love it, but it's still a great record, in composition, scored invention, stylistic chancing. They make things hard for themselves, by being arty. But they really can play.

Mark Sinker

JAMES BLOOD ULMER AMERICA — DO YOU REMEMBER THE LOVE?

(Blue Note BT-85136)

Recorded: Power Station, Quadrasicon, RPM, 1987

I Belong In The USA; Lady Blue; After Dark; Show Me Your Love; America; Black Sheep; Wings.
JBU (g, v), Bill Laswell (4, 6, 8-string b), Ronald Shannon Jackson (d), Nicky Skopelitis (12-string g, bjo), Bernard, Fred and Mursel Fowler (v).

THIS IS THE sort of album whose tunes reverberate in your mind for days after you've listened to them. It's catchy, but surprisingly subtle; compulsively, even basically rhythmic, yet complex in its approach. Ulmer's voice can sound, at times, like both James Brown and Randy Newman; Laswell's bass manages to ring and boom at the same time; Jackson's drumming raps out Beefheartian rartoons then veers off into pure fusion clattering. If all this sounds bewildering it's because the reviewer's traditional refuge, the pigeonhole, is rendered obsolete by the record: it's a maddeningly attractive mix of gospel, jazz-funk and harmonologies. If it were to get a lot of airplay, there seems no good reason why it should sell fewer copies than *The Jesusa Tree*, which it superficially resembles in its anemic-like tunes and its 'big', slightly mournful overall sound (though it's a great deal more musically) — why do I know, for a stone-cold certainty, that it won't? (*Go on, Chris, tell us — Ed*)

Chris Parker

MEL LEWIS ORCHESTRA
20 YEARS AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD
(Atlantic 781 655-1)
Recorded: New York, 20–22 March 1985.
All Of Me, Blue Note, Butter, C-Jam Blues, Dearly Beloved, Interlude, Alone Together, American Express.
Earl Gardner, Joe Morello, Glen Drewes, Jim Powell, Bill Pusey (t), John Mosca, Ed Neumeister (tb), Douglas Purvance, Earl McIntyre (b), Stephanie Fambler (f), Dick Oatts, Ted Nash (as, ss, fl), Joe Lovano, Ralph Lahara (tr, cl, f), Gary Smulyan (bs, bcl), Kenny Werner (p), Dennis Irwin (db), Mel Lewis (d).

THE PROLIFERATION of Monday Night Bands in New York probably now makes it the major evening to be out and about in that city. The original function of Monday night, which was when the house band had its night off or the attraction changed, now talent got a break and the management got cheap music — a bit like Sundays at Dingwall's — has evolved in these cases into what seems to look like a series of jazz institutions, of which Mel the Tailor's crew is by far the longest-established. Obviously musicians have come and gone over that time, and for a long time the band was co-led by Lewis and Thad Jones, but 20 years, celebrated by the title, is still a long time to be in business.

Over this period the character of the band has changed along with its members and the writers. The present team trends a fine line between conservatism and conservation. At times it deploys all the stigmata of bug-band 'excitement' that could make bands like Basie's and Buddy Rich's such bores, but there are also times when very much more interesting things are going on. On Jerry Dodgion's "Butter" or Richard DeRosa's arrangement of "Dearly Beloved" the band explores the kind of sounds that made Claude Thornhill's late-1940s band such a singular outfit (yes, we all know who used to be *his* arranger, but these are not Evans copies — from whatever period — but seem to be more in the order of a move back to go over once again an area that never got fully worked out). Also, on Jim McNeely's "Blue Note" or Brookmeyer's long but well-sustained "American Express", there is more than a hint of Shorty Rogers' Giants, another interesting and less than completely explored area.

The playing, both in solo and ensemble, responds to such stimuli as might be expected, and some beautifully detailed work is done. Lewis himself is an utterly self-effacing leader, swinging away gently behind his band: such modesty should not be allowed to detract from his achievement. A very interesting and attractive album.

Jack Cooke

DEMBO KONTE & KAUSU KUYATEH
TANANTE
(Rogue Records FMSL 2009)
Recorded: Brinkama, The Gambia, December 1986
Tiramakhan, Fajonkoko, Yeyengo, Solo, Sambarhar, Allah La Kone.
Dembo Konte (kora/voc.), Kausu Kuyateh (kora/voc.).

YOU NEED NOT be familiar with the Senegambia/Mali/Guinea region of West Africa to know about the kora these days. The unique sound of this 21-string harp-lute has been heard at increasingly regular intervals, in Europe and America, over the last 15 years. The living history expounded by the hereditary musician/poet/historian jalis has even been seen on the subliminal transference of reality-scoop (TV) in recent years, so they must exist to more than the few.

This latest kora album ties in with the recent tour of Britain by the musicians Dembo Konte and Kausu Kuyateh. Last year Dembo came here with the Gambian National Troupe but he should be better known outside Gambia for his work with the Konte Family. That

group, led by his father the late Alhaji Bai Konte, included his cousin Malamani Jobarteh, with whom he also toured and recorded in duet. As his sister obligingly married Kausu Kuyateh Dembo now finds himself in the company of not only a new partner in music, but, judging by this record, subject to an injection of vigour. It's not that he was previously lacking but more that Kausu — who comes from the Casamance region of southern Senegal — plays with more rhythmic intensity, one which musically infers the drumming of his region. (He normally plays a 23-string version of the kora, with added ringing bass notes.) Here, we are treated to a solo spot, "Yeyengo", where he shows this brilliant form.

The main part of the album is a duet; these two men inspired by each other. (Although the musicians had heard each other's music they had never played together before the night of this recording, which says much for tradition.) Their Mandinka heritage, language and culture go back to at least the 13th-century founding of the Malian Empire. Kora music has been called a 'classical' African music. But that conjures the wrong aura, since it's more like the blues: interweaving harp runs with bell-like pealing notes, injections of rhythmic exclamation, stunning improvisation, and lead-back singing. This record features the bonus of that inspiration to be heard at the start of a successful musical relationship. It was recorded "in the field", in Dembo Konte's village, which produces a slight lack of sound quality. But an indisputable presence more than compensates.

Jak Kilby

GARY BURTON QUINTET
WHIZ KIDS
(ECM 1329)
Recorded: Ludwigshurg, June 1986.
The Last Clown, Yellow Fever, Soulful Ball, La Divera, Cool Train, The Long.
Gary Burton (vib), Tommy Smith (sax), Makoto Ozone (p), Steve Swallow (b), Martin Richards (d).

GARY BURTON has gathered together a distinguished cast, mixing old stalwarts and new arrivals. Steve Swallow has been with him for 20 years, since the days of Larry Coryell — Tommy Smith wasn't even born then. The musicians gel: Makoto Ozone's relaxed piano chimes in with Martin Richards' sensitive, apt drumming, everyone breathes together. And Manfred Eicher's production wraps it all up in one variegated but cohesive totality.

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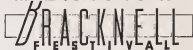
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When Tommy Smith's *Giant Strides* appeared in 1983, he was 16, but the music was exceptional — a firm, deliberate tone and intelligent tunefulness heavily recorded in time format. Yet when he made mistakes, you heard them. Now of course he doesn't make mistakes — in fact his tune "The Last Clown" comes nearer to the record's ideal of calm, swelling trance than any of the others. But I'm afraid Ozono's "Yellow Fever" — light jolliness too anemic to be joyful — had me reaching for the aerosol spray. The inclusion of James Williams being Mulgrew Miller's predecessor in the Jazz Messengers — but it's not an excuse for anything vulgar or noisy (in fact it turns out ominously reminiscent of the *Z Cars* theme).

Gary Burton's retreat from the world of rock seems complete — except that vapidity is really no answer to empty rhetoric, just the other side of the coin. When Dale startles Francis with his liking for Debussy in the film *Round Midnight*, it's recycling an old jazz story — but it's Debussy's harmonic *daring* jazz responds to, not his quiescence. Burton's impressionism, by contrast, is the sound of being asleep.

Having experienced the contrast between Paul Motian/Bill Frisell's clashing, rowing presence live and what they've managed to capture on vinyl (pretty atmospherics, a perpetual opening) I wouldn't want to write off any musicians involved in this tedious record. After all, Pat Metheny suddenly awoke from his habitual golden miasma to abrasive dialogue with Ornette Coleman (I hope Tommy took note).

Ben Watson

DANNY THOMPSON WHATEVER

(Hannibal HNBL 1326)

Recorded London, 1987

Idle Monday, Tall Menor Ah Jan, Youmaker, Lovely Joan, Swedish Dance, Lament For Alex, Crusader, Home Escapade.

Tony Roberts (saxes, cl, f, pipes), Bernie Holland (g, hp), Thompson (b).

ALONG WITH Chris Laurence, Jeff Clyne and a few others, Danny Thompson was one of those British bassists who linked our 60s free playing with the earlier innovations of Wilbur Ware and Scott LaFaro. But Thompson was always more ready to step into rock and folk than the others. He worked with Pentangle (remember the *Take Three Girls* theme?) and is probably

still best known for his long association with John Martyn. Finally, Danny has got an album to himself.

Or, at least, one with his own tunes and his own space, alongside a couple of old mates. Thompson's well-oiled sound — he's always had a good tone — slides melliflously alongside the saxes and guitars. The music has a reedy, faintly rustic quality, less pallid than New Age, not quite in a jazz bag, a bit rougher and livelier than any mood music. The sound offers a nostalgic recall of old Island and Transatlantic sessions, from a time when marginalised sorts of rock and folk were still smiled on by the major companies.

The music strikes no blows to awaken the soul. It's more a peaceful and lyrical celebration of the kind of music-making Danny grew up with, a gentle and very English distillation of many traditional strains. On those terms, it's a delight.

Richard Cook

TONY WILLIAMS CIVILIZATION

(Blue Note BT-85138)

Recorded New York, 1986

Go-Rose, Warrior, Ancient Eyes, Sorrow Night, The Slump, Civilization, Metastasis On The Beach, Citadel Williams (d, cl, machine); Wallace Roney (tr), Billy Pierce (ss, ts), Mulgrew Miller (p); Charnette Moffett (b).

THIS IS AN archetypal Blue Note album: beautifully produced, overwhelmingly tasteful. It's packed with brisk, sizzling up-tempo tunes and leavened with a couple of plaintive, subdued ballads. It's also apparent throughout that it's a drummer-led outing: all the tunes are Williams originals, with percussive, bristly themes followed by

improvisations where it is often difficult to listen to anything but the drums — only Mulgrew Miller manages to impose himself on Williams rather than adopting a complementary role, as the lead instruments, for the most part, do. Not that the horns are vapid — they're fine players in the modern Messengers mould — but where they do shift up a gear, as in Pierce's fierce tenor solo on "Warrior", it appears to be at Williams' urging. In contrast Miller, particularly in a tumbling solo on "Ancient Eyes" and the more sombre outings like "Citadel", is apparently more assertive and self-motivated. A stand-out track is "The Slump", where the main solo voice, intriguingly, is Charnette Moffett's bass, but the energy for which is stroked, as is the entire album, by the wonderfully fierce and indefatigable Williams.

Chris Parker

PETER BRÖTZMANN & BILL LASWELL LOW LIFE

(Celluloid CELL 5016)

Recorded Brooklyn 3-6 January 1987

Dunk Rattle, Low Life, Driveway, Lowwater, Barrier, Whaling Vulture, Corral Dog, Absconter, Land One, Triple Horn, The Last Detective
Peter Brötzmann (sax); Bill Laswell (el-b)

AFTER THE ORGASMIC splendour of their debut album and the gigs at the Shaw, Last Exit's "Noise Of Trouble" was a bit of a disappointment. But these sessions from the band's bassist and reedsman more than make up for that; from the first seconds this is fearsome stuff, instant brain damage. Get yourself sorted before dropping the stylus on it; there are no turn-offs for a hundred miles. Jagged fanfares tear through the speakers, the sax squeals protestingly against the clunking of



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some alien machine. Eerie chants and chimes float over the horizon. Out of the noises of an industrial landscape, Brötzmann emerges with a motif that develops into a flurry of notes which are picked up on the locomotive as a theme. Not for the first time Laswell's jabbing chords have a representational quality, though I don't know whether titles or concepts came first. Brötzmann bellows hoarsely at the barrier as Laswell drums hollowly in reminiscence of Les Structures Sonores, producing sounds like Ornette's violin. The sax and basses tussle for the spoils until Brötzmann opens the next stage of the exploration with an extraordinary cadenza. Later Brötzmann sings us fragments of a softly moaning blues before the bass's thrashing strings move us on. Hairs tingle at the voice roaring through the sound of the sax and keys flap on pads in counterpoint. Pushing past the pulsing chords, we detect in the fading fall after the reed crescendo a strongly tonal, concluding cadence.

Despite the use of exclusively low-register instruments there is a considerable range of timbres thanks to Laswell's imaginative exploitation of technology and Brötzmann's virtuosity in the extreme regions of the bass-sax. Laswell weaves ostinato into tapestries of strange textures and hangs them in deserted corridors where they stir in a low wind and where muffled noises echo along the pipework. The strange mechanism, the glimpsed fragments of ritual, the chugging chords evoking a train journey through a dark countryside. Fascinating, mysterious, frightening apprehensions of our real world.

I think it improbable anything more powerful will jostle this from my record-of-the-year nomination. Even Brötzmann's cover design is excellent.

Barry Witherden

ERIC DOLPHY OTHER ASPECTS

(Blue Note BT 85131)

Recorded: New York City, 8 July 1960 (a), November 1960 (b) & unknown date, 1962 (c) *Jon Crow* (c); *Inner Flight 1* (b); *Dolphy-N* (b); *Inner Flight 2* (b); *Improvisations And Turbas* (a). (a) Dolphy (fl), Gena Lalli (tab, v), Roger Mason (am'ra). (b) Dolphy (fl, as on "Dolphy-N"), Ron Carter (b) on "Dolphy-N". (c) Dolphy (as, bcl, fl, Unknown (p, b, d, v).

ALTHOUGH ERIC DOLPHY's recorded legacy is so pitifully small – James Newton's claim in his sleeve note that it was, "a sizeable oeuvre for only 36 years on this planet", is put into some kind of perspective when you consider what

proportion of that *oeuvre* was the product of working as a sideman or with musicians patently unable to meet the challenge laid down by his spellbinding artistry – his remains one of the most vibrant testaments in the recorded history of this music, and at least half the playing on this collection of previously unissued private recordings from the early 60s sounds as advanced as anything recorded under the banner of 'jazz' in the last 25 years.

Considering the restrictions he was forced to work under, on record at least, during the two years which span these recordings, the great virtue of the set is that it offers a rare opportunity to hear the development of his powers in formats other than the traditional (ly impeding) soloist plus rhythm section.

Having said that however, it should be pointed out that beyond its (for the time at least) adventurous efforts to unite East and West, "Improvisations And Turbas" is to all intents and purposes throwaway, Dolphy's involvement restricted to playing a series of repeated flute obbligatos, behind the farious chanting of Gena Lalli. At this stage of his development his work on flute had yet to blossom into the singularly harsh resonance it would attain in later years, and here he appropriates a near classical intonation, one that is carried over into the two solo pieces.

On these, Brian Case's argument that the flute become Dolphy's "final maturity" is further supported by the way phrases emerge in a cautious order, still tied to a recognisably traditional framework. Both pieces progress with a kind of innocent hesitancy that stands in stark contrast to the savagely assured attack of the alto on "Dolphy-N", a duet performance bearing all the hallmarks of his wondrous technique – the yearning, vocalised tone, the exuberant disregard for symmetry – and one which refuses to pall beside memories of those he recorded with Mingus, Chuck Israels and Richard Davis.

The weight of the record however is contained within the 15 minutes that encompass "Jim Crow", a furiously experimental piece that, aside from a brief middle section where the alto flies with wild abandon over the group's ramshackle waltz, exists in an environment devoid of tempo, metre, pulse or any other guiding factor. Superficially it might have originated as a result of Dolphy's involvement in Max Roach's *Percussion Butter Sweet* project of the previous year, attempting as it does to fuse potentially disparate elements – jazz, a classical European vocal tradition and the sentiments of the black

civil rights movement – into one unifying whole. But any similarity between the two works ends there, for this is a world far removed from the relative conservatism of Roach's experiments, or anyone else's for that matter. The scope of intention Dolphy exhibits here occupies a realm of abstraction more extreme than any heard in jazz before or since, and as such it stands as yet another tragically neglected benchmark in what is, as John Litweiler has maintained, "(one of) the great unfinished careers in art".

Tony Herrington

fast licks

WARNE MARSH & SUSAN CHEN: same (*Interplay* LP-8601). Fourteen very brief improvisations on well-known chords, with only "Skylark" not listed under a *now de plume*. Marsh's tenor is as self-critical and unique as ever, stubbornly extracting a new idea from things he's played for decades, and new pianist Chen shadows him without ever seeming a nuisance. Each piece is complete in itself, though each could be a fragment from something longer.

Mike Fish

BARRY FANTONI: *The Cantor's Crucifixion* (Tabu 4) Forget *Private Eye*. Forget "Big Architect in the Sky", which was fashionably cynical (and innocent of any musical charm). Fantoni digs deep for *The Cantor's Crucifixion*. Its subject – the death camps – is sombre; its means querulously reminiscent of those muted musics that called out against the Holocaust. Fantoni plays all the instruments, saxes, banjo, fiddle, with echoes of the old pre-war cafes, weddings, bar mitzvah and synagogue. At the heart, a long drawn-out cry of despair and pain. Strange, and very remarkable.

Brian Morton

GIL EVANS: *Priestess* (Antilles AN 1010). Surely the best of Gil's latterday recordings is this essential Antilles re-release. The voicing of Billy Harper's theme is a wonder on its own, and with Sanborn, Blythe and Soloff all on imperious form the group travels all the way across the magical Evans spectrum.

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Deadly Weapons (NATO 950). Alterations, while it lived, was a superb band, *My Favorite Animal* one of the distinctive appearances of the last few years. This, alas, is a defeat. Tonic Marshall recites poems, everyone else goes all-out electric and tongue-in-cheek and, boys, it Does Not Work. "Chen Pe'i Pe'i", with Zorn on keyboards and David Toop on alto flute, is the one bright spot. For the rest, those usually deadly weapons have been beaten into something suspiciously like plowshares.

Brian Morton

Woke Up This Mornin' . . .

Mike Atherton On Recent Blues

OTIS "SMOKEY" SMOTHERS always sounded like Jimmy Reed. On his early recordings for Federal, nobly resound here on *Krazy Kat* five years ago, the laconic vocals, laid-back rhythms and occasional train-whistle harmonica were redolent of the Big Boss Man's style — not surprisingly, since Reed was enjoying great commercial success at the time. The public, however, didn't need another electric downhome bluesman, and by the late 60s Smothers had quit the biz, apparently for ever. In 1980, a group of young Chicago musicians lured him back into performing again. A single came out on Roosters, and now Smokey has a new LP in the shops.

And still the spectre of Jimmy Reed haunts *Got My Eye On You* (Steeplechase SCB 9009). The lazy vocal delivery and admirable lack of slickness suggest an artist who moved north from Mississippi in 1986, rather than in '46 as was in fact the case. What's more, Smothers now plays far more slide guitar than hitherto, further enhancing the juke-joint flavour of his music; it's particularly evident on "Ever Ready Daddy".

There are echoes of other Delta-to-Chicago artists in his blues: "Searching For My Baby" is very Muddy Waters, and "You're My Bird" is a dead-ringer for Homesick James' "Can't Afford To Do It". But Smokey Smothers should not be regarded as a mere copyist, more as a repository of Delta musical tradition. His is, lamentably, almost a lone voice these days, a style with nary a hint of city slickness or B.B.

King string-bending. Discreetly accompanied by his regular young band The Ice Cream Men, he's made a 1950s blues album in the 1980s: an album that sneaks up by one's side rather than hitting one between the eyes.

Another artist who is sometimes dismissed as a mere copyist is TAJ MAHAL. New York-born, university-educated, he's ploughed an eclectic furrow through a wide spectrum of black music for nigh on 20 years, taking in blues, African music and reggae *inter alia*. His latest LP, *Taj on Sonet*, reflects his current domicile of Hawaii, but that need not concern us here. More pertinent is Edsel's reissue of his 1968 debut set *Taj Mahal* (Edsel ED 166).

Cotton-picking, came-up-the-hard-way bluesman Taj Mahal certainly is not, but he's always studied and assimilated the various areas of black music with apparent ease. In '68 he was obviously spending a great deal of time listening to such country blues masters as Sleepy John Estes, Robert Johnson and Blind Willie McTell. What could be more natural, then, than to take a handful of songs by these men, go into the studio and cut them with an electric band including the likes of Jesse Ed Davis and Ry Cooder?

Yes, it sounds like a recipe for disaster. The result, however, is a warm, swinging and often exhilarating album which has fully withstood the test of time. The key to it all is Mahal himself, singing each number in a Wilson Pickettesque roar of a voice, blowing country-style harp and evidently enjoying every moment. There's no question of irreverence: songs of the 30s get the blues band treatment of the 60s, but the song itself is always paramount in the performance.

McTell's "Statesboro Blues" truly rocks out, propelled by nicely-judged slide guitar from Davis; Estes' "Everybody Got To Change Sometime" sits comfortably on the rhythm of Howlin' Wolf's "Killing Floor", with Mahal even throwing in Wolf's famous exhortation to "Play that guitar till it smokes" midway, and another Estes blues, "Leaving Trunk", survives a thunderous bass riff through the sheer gusto of the vocal performance. This is a highly accomplished blues LP which always seems to be over too soon: that must be a good sign.

The same cannot always be said of live recordings of the blues. The economics of blues record labels usually precludes the use of the Virgin Mobile or suchlike, more often it's the Japanese tape recorder mobile in row three of the stalls. Poor sound balance can turn what was a satisfying live show into a tedious listening experience. An honourable exception

is the US Alligator label, whose live LPs of HOUND DOG TAYLOR and ALBERT COLLINS are first-rate, but other labels achieve varying degrees of success with their live efforts.

Two cases in point are currently on release. First off, ex-Muddy Waters pianist PINETOP PERKINS has a set on JSP entitled *Chicago Boogie Blues Piano Man* (JSP 1107). It was cut in Maine in '85 with a largely unknown band, and its eight tracks span 44 minutes. The album has problems of both sound quality and musical content. There's intermittent feedback hum and squeal throughout; and of the six-piece band only the piano, drums and harmonica are consistently audible. Side two starts halfway through a verse, and one must question whether anyone needs eight minutes of "Really Love That Woman", a song stretched too thin and marred by a tentative and irrelevant sax.

Notwithstanding, the record has some fine moments. Perkins' blues piano technique is impeccable and laden with feeling and his voice, though not great, is warm and expressive. Harpman Bill Dacey plays in an appropriate Little Walter style on numbers like "For You My Love" and acquires himself well. "Kansas City", "Perkins Boogie Woogie" (based on the one by the other Pinetop) and Robert Parker's "Barefootin'" are all spirited and entertaining, but one is left wishing that the album were a little shorter.

PHIL GUY, Buddy's younger brother, doesn't play the guitar with the lyrical grace of his sibling, but he is a good, tough, modern Chicago axeman, as he ably demonstrated on his British dates a year or so ago. The small BeBe label caught him live with his Chicago Machine at the Windy City's Roma Lounge in 1983, and part of that show now emerges as *Tough Guy* (Red Lightnin' RL 0062).

Here, the sound is much clearer than on the Perkins set: all five instruments are crisply captured. Unfortunately, Guy's voice isn't, and he sounds as if he was singing in the toilet. Nor that his voice is exceptional anyway, but it would be nice to hear what he's singing about. Thus, the two instrumental inclusions come off best: "Chicken Shack", loosely based on the Amos Milburn number, and particularly "Frosty" on which Guy's choppy guitar works up quite a head of steam.

With a fine band which includes organist Professor Eddie Lusk and tenor saxman A.C. Reed, this album has potential. But the failure of BeBe Records to connect the vocal mike to their recording machine has robbed it of some of its appeal.



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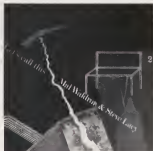
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Books

Black Popular Music In America

BY ARNOLD SHAW
(Schiemer Books)

A FULL THIRD of *Black Popular Music In America* deals with black American song before and during the age of vaudeville. Thus it spends a lot of time on the subject of blackface – as it does on 'coon songs', 'coon shouting', the origin of the cakewalk, and 'plantation melodies' ('songs in slave dialect'). Page after page teems with fabulous names: the Original Smart Set Company, the New York Syncopated Orchestra, Williams and Walker's Senegambian Carnival, the Original Black Diamonds, the Mastodon Minstrels. And careers of a fascinating convulsion come and go like transients in a coach station, their usual consideration a paragraph and a half.

We may learn how Eubie Blake studied ragtime from Baltimore bar haberees like Big-Head Wilt or Yellow Nelson, or how 1880s minstrel-circuit promoter Charles Hicks perished on tour in Surabaya, Japan. But as soon as we meet them, these characters vanish like wraiths – stripped of their natural resonance and connection to the rest of the text.

It's a tribute to the forgotten entertainers of the past that they do project so vividly from the page. For Shaw's sage is a ponderous assembly of dry data (mostly lists, dates and titles) ponderously compiled. Its most frustrating quality is inconsistency of focus – irritating during the first chapters and positively comic when genres such as 'jazz' or 'the blues' are crammed into seven or eight pages each.

But the book's worst flaw is its utter lack of engagement with the politics and economics of racism. Shaw industriously turns up every literal fact he can find about the chronology of blackface and the provenance of titles like "All Coons Look Alike To Me". Yet he rarely alludes to the ramifications of prejudice. Not that it's hard to detect what lies behind the book's litany of medical ills (strokes, breakdowns, the despair of drugs and drink), contractual woes and missed chances. But take away the explicit consideration of racism's changing face and you end up with a volume which is baffling, redundant and false.

CYNTHIA ROSE



Lennie Niehaus: even I am included

Jazz The Essential Companion

BY IAN CARR, DIGBY
FAIRWEATHER AND BRIAN
PRIESTLEY
(Grafton)

MY SHELF is starting to sag under the weight of jazz reference tomes. But a good, modern, well-written biographical directory of jazz musicians is something that's been missing. This book does an excellent job of filling the gap.

I made a list of ten names that I thought were hard but ought to be included: eight of them were in there, which is a pretty fair strike rate. The missing two were Willem Breuker (preposterous) and Connie Bauer (less so). Reviews of this sort of book always dwell on why-on-earth-didn't-they-include-him thinking: I am more baffled as to why some people were included. I don't wish to denigrate such capable musicians as Eggy Ley, Ruthie Smieth, Casper Reardon and Martin Litton, but they are scarcely reference book material yet. There is a very strong bias towards British jazz – mostly Digby's mates – at the inevitable expense of a proper coverage of the European scenes. Scandinavia, France, German and

above all Italy do very poorly as far as entry numbers are concerned; xenophobic to a fault.

The interesting thing is how readable the book is. It might be meant as an encyclopedia but it's a very entertaining one. The three writers blend rather well: Fairweather is chatty and colourful, sprinkling most of his entries with funny stories and one-liner quotes; Priestley is pithy, brief and spot-on; Carr is somewhere between the two. It means, though, that there are often rather absurd imbalances in the entries. Priestley writes 31 lines on a major figure like Phil Woods; Fairweather writes more about such lesser figures as Keith Ingham and Dave Shepherd, while Carr manages to write 98 lines about Eberhard Weber. I don't like to imply that there's a certain favouritism involved, but there's a certain favouritism involved.

This seems to be turning into a negative review. Actually, this is a splendidly written, authoritative and faithful book. There are some very sharp, quick-witted analyses on players like Mulligan, Frank Rosolino and Connie Kay and a general approach which manages to be respectful without shirking all critical obligations. Another gap filled.

RICHARD COOK

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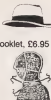
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From Our Learned Friend

I SHARE MAX Harrison's misgivings about the Bruyninx discographies. However, Harold Farberman's *Dedicated To Dolphy* is included in the unpromising *Modern Big Band Volume I*, where it is dated 1966.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY, WI

"Splatch", Marcus Miller did!

In return for this false accusation of plagiarism I should like to accuse Ben Watson of writing an ill-informed review full of more "shock devices" than even my worst compositions.

DJANGO BATES, Beckenham

bands was completely off the point.

F C MARRIOTT, Brighton

Django

THERE WAS A time when jazz critics were also jazz experts (and often players). People like Nat Hentoff who wrote great books that made people want to hear jazz. I'm afraid I question whether Ben Watson (*Wire* critic) is an expert in this tradition. If he was an expert, or even just an experienced critic of jazz musicians, he would have known that Iain Ballamy's tune "Thud" was broadcast on Radio 3 in January 1986, having been written two months earlier - about ten months before Miles Davis's recording of "Splatch" appeared. Incidentally, Ben, Miles didn't write

Ben In More Trouble

I RARELY GET roused enough to fall to the pen but where did you get that self-confessed Yorkshire chauvinist Ben Watson from? His reference to the "antics" of Ichy Fingers and his derogatory comments about the Andy Sheppard Quartet (whom he didn't have the decency to mention by name) was completely uncalled for. Has the man no manners (not to mention taste)?

If Mr Watson likes a bit of "bop tradition" then let him stick to his "dapper front men" and "potted palms" but don't get it confused with real jazz. Creative criticism I don't mind but to resort to offensive put-downs of other

Wheeler's Fortune

IN 1985 I bought *Double, Double You*. Kenny Wheeler's masterpiece is an important record. Kenny Wheeler is a damned important musician. While the international jazz family can boast Wheeler, John Taylor and Dave Holland, it can only progress and create. Ian Carr speaks of the "extraordinary neglect" of such musicians (*Wire* 39). This is an understatement.

Consequently, I hope that the Musicians Union "earmarks" more than "some" money in order to assist the launching of Jazz Directions Ltd, the hosts of which serve as a paradigm of the finest in contemporary music. Who knows, Kenny Wheeler may well become a name of as much chessmatic standing as a Marsalis. He is well worthy of such stature. To Jazz Directions Ltd: the very best of luck.

RALPH BROOKER,
1st Bn Royal Hampshire Regiment



Glasgow Youth Jazz Orchestra

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


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THIS IS IT. The event of the year. The climax of British Jazz Month. On 1 November, *Wire* magazine will be hosting the British



Jazz Awards 1987 ceremony at a major London venue. And we need you to help us decide the winners.

OVERLEAF you'll find a voting form, listing nine award categories. We've shown three nominees in each section — but if you don't like our chosen few then there's space to include your own selection in each category.

THE WINNERS of each section will receive their award at what will be a night to remember. Live music and live people in living colour. An affair of distinction and a smart night out.



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Django Bates

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